
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 initiative proposes to offer vetted / motivated students the ability to customize their own degree within the CFA to match their interdisciplinary interests and professional goals. This could combine studio / history / design / performance / music or sound / dance etc. This aligns with the multidisciplinary nature of contemporary artists today who work in a variety of disciplines and allow our students in this degree to have a “leg up” on beginning multidimensional careers upon graduation. It is the rare artist these days who makes it to the top tiers of international recognition by working strictly in one medium. This degree could perhaps be modeled on the Arts Management degree—a multidisciplinary major that combines the arts in all CFA units with business. This new CFA BFA, however, would explore the creative side of the arts in totality and re-think exactly what a contemporary artist can be—allowing the motivated student (with careful advising and/or faculty mentorship) to curate their own degree components. At the moment, a number of CFA majors have double majors and/or multiple minors, which can cause significant hardships of time and money. An inclusive CFA BFA could expedite those students’ graduation and attract a higher quality of curious, creative applicants with this innovative allowance of more freedom within the CFA. With this new way to study the arts, we could graduate designer/sculptor/theatrical artists, installation artists who perform within their own painted and sculpted environments, or perhaps musician/sculptors who create their own instruments, as well as art historians who not only research and write about art but also create their own work. [While the accreditation for a BFA will need to be scrutinized in detail if this proposal goes forward, I believe we should aim high rather than only consider a BA.]

- 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?

Frostic School of Art, School of Theatre and Dance, School of Music and RIDI will be involved to varying degrees. In the future, CFA BFA students who might want to take advanced (normally major only) courses in other colleges as dictated by their projects (technology, research into topics outside of the arts, etc.) might need approval from the other departments / colleges, thus cross-college cooperation will be necessary. Modeling this new CFA degree on multi-disciplinarity will certainly require some thoughtful advising and mentoring, thus discussions to formulate how this degree be successfully constructed will certainly involve all advisors within the CFA.

- 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?

This particular BFA would allow a greater depth of exploration and at the same time streamline a student's artistic education. Currently, visual arts students who wish to major in two or more areas of emphasis or fields (art history and studio) are penalized because of concern for "double-dipping" on basic requirements. This will resolve that problem by having the basic foundations of arts serve for all and any advanced courses curated for the CFA BFA degree. Those pursuing the CFA BFA could also add minors from other colleges as suited to their ambitions (film, communications, philosophy, etc.)

- 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?

This type of open college degree will greatly promote original discovery by allowing individual creativity "free range." It is certainly possible that a student with a wider range of creative skills (originality emphasized) might be a much more viable candidate for external scholarships, internships, and residencies. It is also quite possible that an external grant (or interested donor) might be sought to afford the CFA the ability to set up and market this new program.

As stated earlier, contemporary artists in today's international art world are not limited in their practice. Well-known artists work with sound, performance, movement, as well as create in multiple mediums (sculpture of many materials, painting, print, video, etc.). Musicians create their own instruments, singers may edit their own films, visual artists may utilize deeply conceptual notions while choreographing interactive installations. Most schools of art, however, continue to work within rigid silos of media and thus constrict the ability of ambitious students from taking advanced courses that interest them and expand their skill sets. This proposal would allow a limited number of vetted students to enroll in courses within the College of Fine Arts to further their multi-dimensional practice. This sort of BFA will undoubtedly attract enterprising applicants and set apart our art programs from other institutions of higher education that continue to follow more traditional (outdated) curricula. [The University of Michigan has an interarts degree that includes visual arts and performance, but it does not allow as much range as suggested by this proposed CFA BFA.]

- 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?

For students, this will certainly expedite the graduation of a student who normally would have taken longer and spent more money to achieve two majors or several additional minors to satisfy their educational aims.

- 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?

No courses need be revised. Allowing a CFA BFA into courses across the college may well help enrollments of some courses that have the capacity to include one or two more per semester.

Discussion of primary faculty mentorship in collaboration with advisory may require some creative rethinking of workload. Should one faculty member mentor all of these majors as the Director of the CFA BFA? Should enrollment goals begin with a competitive cohort of 5 or 6 that would expand each year? Or should interested faculty members take on no more than one CFA BFA per year with service credit? A deeper discussion of workload and adequate compensation for such mentorship should be resolved and then fully supported by the CFA.

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

8. Contact

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