

## 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?

The interdisciplinary teacher education program is a model that will unify all K-12 teacher education programs housed in different departments and colleges to improve coordination, communication and collaboration. Within this model, faculty will be able to engage in interdisciplinary teaching and research focused on a theme such as social justice. Graduates from WMU's teacher programs will be leaders in interdisciplinary teaching in K-12 classrooms to prepare a generation of learners that have the skills to think critically and solve complex problems.

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?

Teacher education is housed in the following programs in the College of Education and Human Development, College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Fine Arts.

Early Childhood Education  
Elementary Education  
Secondary Education  
Educational Foundations  
Special Education  
TESOL  
Literacy Studies  
Physical and Health Education  
Workforce Development  
Educational Leadership K-12  
Educational Technology  
Evaluation, Measurement and Research  
English Education  
Math Education  
Science Education  
Social Studies Education  
Art Education  
Music Education

Currently, these programs are part of the Educator Preparation Governing Council to provide input on WMU teacher education policies and procedures related to national accreditation and state program approval. Potential partners for the interdisciplinary teacher education program

are faculty in programs that prepare school-based professionals in the College of Health and Human Services, such as Occupational Therapy, Social Work, Speech and Language and Hearing Services. We welcome the opportunity to collaborate with these program areas.

- 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?

Due to new Michigan Department of Education grade bands and standards for early childhood education, elementary and secondary education, WMU has developed new programs in these areas that are interdisciplinary. In the old programs, students took content courses in the College of Arts and Sciences and most of their teaching methods courses in the College of Education and Human Development and completed an internship at the end of the program. In the new program, content and teaching methods are integrated into each course and are paired with clinical experiences throughout the program. Therefore, faculty across programs have the opportunity to co-teach to support students in the clinical experiences throughout the program. In doing so, they will be able to teach thematically across the disciplines to model interdisciplinary teaching for our students as they teach thematically in their K-12 clinical experiences. This new model allows us to choose a theme for our program such as social justice that will help us stand out among our peer institutions and increase enrollment. In addition, this model will increase faculty engagement in K-12 schools and strengthen our school partnerships.

- 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?

As faculty engage in interdisciplinary teaching, they will have more opportunities to develop interdisciplinary research projects to evaluate the effectiveness of this interdisciplinary model on teaching and learning for WMU students and K-12 students. In addition, research projects on interdisciplinary themes such as social justice will also emerge. These established partnerships and ongoing research projects will position faculty to easily obtain external funding to improve our programs and provide additional resources for our students.

- 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?

The goal of the interdisciplinary teacher education model is to increase efficiency to improve coordination, communication and collaboration among all K-12 teacher education programs at WMU. In doing so, we will improve the quality of our teacher education program, which will increase enrollment and program revenue. In this model, faculty who teach elementary education courses across the program areas will meet regularly as a collaborative team rather than in separate programs to work on curriculum, assessment and research. Likewise, secondary education programs and K-12 education programs will also meet in larger teams.

- 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?

The interdisciplinary model will also impact graduate programs in teacher education. It will be easier to coordinate electives to utilize existing instructional resources across programs. In this model, program electives classes will have a wider audience and generate more revenue.

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

The new early childhood education, elementary education, secondary education, English as Second Language, and Special Education programs are designed to be interdisciplinary. The Educator Preparation Governing Council is in place to support cross program collaboration. The proposed Interdisciplinary Teacher Education program is needed to give our program a focus that will help us stand out among our peer institutions. We realize that this will lead to a restructuring of programs and departments. Faculty in the impacted programs and departments will need to provide input on the new structure to have their concerns about changes in workload, tenure and promotion addressed.

- 8. Contact**

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