

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 proposed initiative would create an interdisciplinary Center for Global Leadership in Education and Society, which would provide a “low-stakes” opportunity for various faculty, staff, and academic/professional units to engage in interdisciplinary work around complex global issues (e.g., global leadership, global peace and security, global education and development). Although the center would have a focus on global leadership, in practice, it would allow faculty and staff to come together to explore any variety of complex global issues in which innovative and informed leadership is required. I also describe this center as a “low-stakes” opportunity for interdisciplinarity as it would not necessarily require joint appointments or formal affiliations by faculty/staff. Instead, the center would serve as an idea clearinghouse that would promote interdisciplinary discussion and activities among faculty and staff across campus who engage in study and practice around global issues. I would envision a structure/function like other interdisciplinary centers on campus, such as the WMU Center for the Humanities.

- 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?

The proposed center would not formally impact any units on campus, per se, instead it would facilitate and encourage collaborative dialogue, research, and work around complex global issues that required the diverse perspectives of various disciplines. Initially, I would envision the College of Education and Human Development, the Haenicke Institute for Global Education, and the Global and International Studies program being involved in the beginning of this initiative. However, I believe that future participation in the center would be open to a variety of campus and community constituents. For instance, those studying leadership issues in the Haworth College of Business would be invited to participate as well as other humanities and social science-based disciplines who explore global issues (e.g., history, anthropology, comparative religion, political science, foreign languages and literature). In addition, units such as WMUx, Office of Faculty Development, and the new University College could collaborate with center activities to infuse these new and existing initiatives with the global engagement principles that are part of the fabric of WMU. Finally, I believe there could be several potential possible opportunities to collaborate with community organizations with a global focus including the Upjohn Institute, WMU Med, the World Affairs Council of Western Michigan, the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition (USGLC) and Colleagues International (Kalamazoo-area non-profit organization).

- 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?

As the proposed initiative is for a center and does not currently include plans for an institute or formally affiliating with established academic units, it will not necessarily have a formal impact on teaching, learning and curricula through the creation of new programs and/or course offerings. However, there is great potential for the center to bring together disparate faculty and academic units to discuss ways in which their programs are already successful in addressing complex global issues and how these efforts might be improved through interdisciplinary collaboration across academic units. For instance, I have been in discussions between the Global and International Studies (GIST) undergraduate BA and the Educational and Global Leadership (EGL) MA program in developing an Accelerated Graduate Degree Program (AGDP) between the two programs using existing courses and faculty. Such an example seems like an obvious win for WMU by allowing students to earn both degrees, with some similar areas of focus, in an accelerated manor. This discussion was possible because I serve as the program coordinator for the EGL program but am also informally affiliated with the GIST program and have a good relationship with the director. Just think of how many additional curricular innovations like this would be possible by creating a clearinghouse to encourage faculty from different programs focus on global issues to dialogue and share their interests. These potential curricular innovations that enhance the learning of our undergraduate and graduate students would no doubt be popular and could serve to increase enrollment across such programs and at the institution broadly. In addition, this would positively impact training disciplinary training for these students by offering an interdisciplinary approach to studying complex global issues made possible by connections the center will help establish across department and academic units. Finally, as the focus of the center is on issues of global leadership and solving complex global issues, there is an obvious connection between this goal and enhancing diversity and inclusion on WMU's campus. More students will be exposed to diverse global issues through expansion of an interdisciplinary approach to global studies. In addition, the center could also serve a role in promoting interdisciplinary approaches to co-curricular activities by connecting units such as the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, the Division of Student Affairs, and the Haenicke Institute for Global Education. There is no need to simply stop our interdisciplinary efforts at the curricular level. There is also a great deal of synergy that could be gained by expanding our efforts at interdisciplinarity to students' co-curricular activities as well.

In terms of this proposal supporting WMU's commitment to diversity and inclusion, by supporting global engagement through research/creative activities, faculty development, curricular innovations and stud

- 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?

The proposed center has the potential to greatly impact both research and creative activity as well as increasing external funding at the institution. There are many faculty and staff on campus engaged in work related to complex global issues; however, the siloed nature of our

disciplines and our colleges/units often prevent these individuals from connecting with one another and sharing the diverse perspectives necessary for solving these complex global issues. The center would serve as a “space” inviting faculty and staff opportunities to learn about each other’s work, to connect and collaborate, and to work together to pool their knowledge and resources to enhance their research and creative scholarship in ways that would not be possible when working alone. The center would do this by offering ongoing interdisciplinary discussion/working groups, connecting faculty and staff focus on similar issues with each other and with members of the larger Kalamazoo and Southwest Michigan community, and potentially hosting events and guest speakers to share knowledge in collaboration with other programs and units on campus. Finally, the ability to support faculty and staff engagement in collaborative scholarship around complex global issues would serve to increase potential external funding opportunities, as many contemporary RFP’s either encourage or require interdisciplinary teams from multiple disciplines. A major goal of the center will be to seek its own external funding opportunities for operational purposes and to support faculty who choose to engage with the center to develop interdisciplinary teams to apply for external funding supporting scholarship on important complex global issues facing our society.

- 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 main way this proposal seeks to provide efficiencies and cost savings is through its ability to create a center that would establish connections between various faculty, staff and units across campus focused on global issues and problems. Due to the siloed nature of the academy, there are often multiple, redundant efforts focused on research, teaching and professional development. By creating a “space” to periodically connect various units on campus, individuals will be able to discover and discuss these redundancies and can work together to pool resources to accomplish the same outcomes or share personnel and facilities in a manner that potentially reduces the professional responsibilities and loads that individuals in these units share through collaboration and more efficient use of existing resources.

It is hoped that during the initial years of the center (three years or less) there would be some willingness on behalf of the supportive units (e.g., Provost’s Office, CEHD Dean’s Office, HIGE, WMUx) to provide a small operating budget (<\$5000) per year or in-kind funding (center director course reassignments, GA support) to support proposed collaborative programs and opportunities. This budget would be contingent on an annual report submitted by the center director to the funding partners outlining accomplishments and initiative implemented.

Following this three-year period, the center plans to be self-sustaining by pursuing external funding. Further, there is also potential for the center to obtain sufficient external funding to not only fund its operations but to provide additional resources for faculty and units who collaborate with the center to pursue initiatives that they may not have funding for.

- 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?

As the center is designed to be a “low-stakes” opportunity for faculty and staff to engage in interdisciplinary opportunities related to global engagement, there is no need to hire additional

faculty and/or support staff. The center will offer formal/informal opportunities for interdisciplinary among faculty and staff and will seek external funding opportunities within the current workload of the center director. However, once the center is established and helps to create networks among faculty, staff and units addressing global issues, no goal will be to help these collaborators identify overlap and/or opportunities to pool resources, which would ultimately result in time and cost savings and may lead to streaming of curricula. For instance, in the case of significant overlap between programs, faculty could work together, through support of the center, to better streamline course/program offerings and work together in delivery of offerings. Further, if one department has difficulty in offering a particular set of courses or offerings to students, perhaps they will find a faculty colleague in another department who could offer their expertise to provide those offerings to the department in need, create dual-enrolled courses (to decreased the number of under enrolled courses and/or provide opportunities for team teaching to enhance the classroom learning of students.

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

At the February 4, 2021 WMU Faculty Senate meeting, both Board of Trustees Chair, Lynn Chen-Zhang, and President Edward Montgomery extolled past and ongoing global engagement efforts at WMU and indicated their support for a continued focus on global engagement and the critical need to further internationalization the institution and to provide global learning opportunities for our students, faculty and staff. Through these efforts, we can ensure that WMU is a leader in producing global and inclusive graduates who are prepared to make an impact in their chosen fields and in our global society more broadly. I respectfully submit that this proposed center would be an important way to continue WMU's leadership in global engagement efforts among our peers and to position ourselves as a top leader in internationalization within the broader landscape of all colleges and universities in the U.S.

8. Contact

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