

## Interdisciplinarity@WMU- Phase One planning Template

Version 2 of 2.

- 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?

Please note: this proposal supersedes the proposal previously submitted by Yuanliang Sun.

We propose to:

- 1.) Realign the Product Design program more fully into the Gwen Frostic School of Art (FSoA)\*
- 2.) Incorporate design related programs currently housed in other areas of the university into the FSoA (e.g. Fashion Design and Interior Design). This would include the new Kinetic Imaging program and potentially other programs in the future.
- 3.) Update the name of the school to “Gwen Frostic School of Art & Design” to reflect the aforementioned changes and better represent our identity as an integrated school of art and design.

The Richmond Institute of Design (RIDI) could continue to exist as an external-facing fundraising entity and as a hub for collaboration between the FSoA+D with other parts of the university, corporate partners, etc.. Housing only design areas within RIDI limits opportunities for collaboration and sends the incorrect message to faculty, students, and corporate partners that innovation only comes from design disciplines.

This proposed change seeks to solve the following problems:

- Reduce administrative expenses associated with splitting art and design areas into separate units, or having them function semi-independently, as they currently operate.
- Reduce barriers for interdisciplinary opportunities between art and design students.
- Offer shared courses to better serve the needs of design students while strengthening enrollments and revenues in the school. (e.g. Design History, design focused foundation courses)
- Eliminate confusion over existing reporting structures.
- Create and present a more interdisciplinary identity as a unit.
  
- Provide a more appropriate home unit for design areas currently housed in other areas of the University (e.g. Fashion Design and Interior Design). These programs would benefit from the combined collaboration, stability and strength of a larger Frostic School of Art & Design.
- Increasing retention by allowing students the opportunity to explore a range of options before selecting a major or concentration.

\* On paper, Product Design is currently a part of the FSoA. In practice, it exists halfway between FSoA and RIDI. This has created a cultural rift and a siloing of art and design where one need not exist. Students, faculty, and outsiders tend to see Product Design as separate and distinct from the rest of the FSoA.

- 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 Frostic School of Art
  - Richmond Institute of Design and Innovation
  - Fashion Design Program
  - Interior Design Program
  - Kinetic Imaging
  - The Graphic Design BFA program and The Design Center
  - Future programs that span both art and design
  
- 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?
  - Shared labs / tools / fabrication facilities / faculty / staff between product design, graphic design, sculpture, wood shop etc.
  - Shared high-profile visiting designers/lectures (There is currently little to no cross-over)
  - Shared design-oriented study-abroad programs
  - Shared design foundations courses between design areas
  - Shared design special topics courses between units
  - Increased design history course offerings and an expansion of Art & Design History offerings due to increased enrollments of design students
  - Shared writing about design courses between design areas
  - Increased opportunities for new courses and programs that include both art and design
  
- 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?
  - More interdisciplinary crossover between art and design areas through shared courses
  - More interdisciplinary interactions between art and design faculty and students
  - External funding coordinated through RIDI could involve multiple art and design areas
  
- 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?
  - Shared unit administrative positions and staff support services
  - Shared fabrication facilities and computer labs

- More areas in the Frostic School of Art & Design could benefit from the fundraising capabilities of RIDI

**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 proposal will help streamline existing course or program offerings and better match course offerings to students' needs.
- Potential for shared courses / increased enrollments in under-enrolled courses throughout the Frostic School of Art for all art and design areas.
- Introducing shared foundations and design history courses between design areas (product design, graphic design, fashion design, interior design and potentially kinetic imaging) could better serve students' needs and eliminate redundant courses currently offered separately.

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

In discussions of this and related proposals, an overwhelming majority of faculty from the Frostic School of Art support keeping art and design areas together.

We believe that a unified school of art and design, which values both disciplines as related, interdependent, and valuable, will create a rich interdisciplinary environment in the spirit of the Provost's request to look for ways to increase "interdisciplinary-driven teaching, learning, and discovery."

**8. Contact**

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