

## 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 supports the merger of the Department of Theatre and the Department of Dance into the School of Theatre and Dance. The initiative challenges us to consider if two programs, each nationally recognized, fully enrolled, with some of the best retention in the university can merge without damaging the integrity and success of either unit.

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?

As stated, this proposal merges two independent department into one school. Theatre and Dance already collaborate to support the Music Theatre Program. This merger may create new possibilities between these disciplines. The new school would also seek collaborations across the college and university as theatre and dance have traditionally done.

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 noted both the department of theatre and department of dance are already beyond capacity in their enrollments. Both units are already interested in expanding our learner base beyond our majors and minors and beyond the capacity in our existing WES offerings and courses for non-majors, but we do not have the physical space nor the faculty load capacity for such expansion and the merger will not impact this.

We do expect that a closer relationship between the programs will broaden the artistic horizons of our students. Additionally, the good work being done in each individual unit to advance diversity, equity and inclusion will be enhanced by the sharing of this work across the larger population created by the merger.

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?

There is the potential that cross-disciplinary research resulting from increased collaboration between dance and theatre faculty might generate increased external funding. But it is dependent on choices made by the faculty and challenged by decreased funding for the arts in our current time.

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 school would have one full-time director and one part-time associate director instead of two full time chairs. One staff position has already been eliminated due to budget cuts and the departments are working together to try to minimize the impact of this loss by distributing work among other staff members in both units (which is a significant challenge given that all those staff members have had individual reductions in hours thus making it extremely difficult to add additional responsibilities to their workloads). Both departments are already short of space for classes and production work.

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 new course offerings are part of this proposal. Nor will this proposal necessarily involve streamlining current curriculum as the programs do not have “overlapping” course offerings. Almost no classes in either department are consistently under-enrolled; the few classes that have lower enrollment do not cross disciplines such that this merger will impact enrollment. We do not anticipate that this merger will impact faculty load.

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

8. **Contact**

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