

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?

We are proposing mutual tracks within Food and Consumer Packaged Goods Marketing (FMK), Integrated Supply Management (ISM), Nutrition/Dietetics, and Product and Packaging Design in order to ensure WMU continues to evolve its strong programs; offer a more deeply interdisciplinary approach to our students' skill sets; form collaborative, multi-disciplinary programs that solve complex, interconnected problems; be an integral part of external recruiting at WMU; and ensure our WMU students are the best positioned graduates, in terms of problem-solving vision and ability, diversity of skills, and uniqueness of focus area mix. In these tracks, students can take groups of classes in complementary majors, and learn how to approach complex industry issues, while also maintaining their current major and graduate within four years. The goal is to group already existing courses into tracks that can be seen as enhancing student skill sets upon graduation.

The Food and Consumer Packaged Goods Marketing (FMK) major is one of the highest profile majors at WMU, and is widely seen as the top tier FMK program in the United States. The Integrated Supply Management (ISM) major is a top ten ranked program in the country, as well. The Nutrition/Dietetics program is well-established and regarded, and the Product and Packaging Design area is new and trending in a positive direction- just graduating its first cohort in May, 2021. If all four areas can be seen as collaboratively addressing our mutual industries, while also offering a curriculum unmatched by other universities, we can set WMU apart from others during the student recruitment process; while also further establish WMU's research credibility in the industry and in academia.

By offering these tracks, we can position our university as a student-focused and industry-friendly school for prospective students locally, regionally, and nationally.

- 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?

We are proposing mutual tracks within Food and Consumer Packaged Goods Marketing (FMK), Integrated Supply Management (ISM), Nutrition/Dietetics, and Product and Packaging Design. These areas, two outside HCOB and one inside, offer strong complementary opportunities.

It would make sense to develop a menu of tracks for all HCOB majors, and those majors to also look to other schools for intuitive collaboration; keeping in mind, students inside one school are already taking the principles courses that will allow them understand the topics with a

fundamental base of knowledge. Externally, across campus, these principles classes would need to be satisfied; in order to ensure the student is best positioned for success.

- 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?

By offering specialized tracks, WMU offers the ability to focus in another major without the student's having to change majors or double major. These tracks will also allow all four programs to look for commonality in courses, where there is overlap. This impact will be more evident in the two programs inside the Haworth School of Business- FMK and ISM. The tracks allow WMU to stay ahead of the trend to incorporate customer and store focuses into FMK, ISM, N/D, and PPD, where there is a value in students seeking focused skills and interests that match various industries, including supply chain/ inventory replenishment, dietetics and nutrition, culinary business, and product design. A unified, or "unified at the end" by tracks, program is highly attractive for student recruitment and builds a high barrier to entry for our program versus competitors. It also allows for a strong executive education component, which could also serve to develop alternate revenue flows.

The Food and Consumer Packaged Goods Marketing (FMK) and Integrated Supply Management (ISM) skills are inextricably intertwined in the food industry. Strength in one area, without skills in the other area, could hamper our students' success rates past entry to mid-level. The two areas share common research interests, common connections in the industry, and there are multiple course overlaps. An interdisciplinary approach, through offering mutual tracks will seek to solve the issue of offering flexibility to our students in pursuing "enough" knowledge in both areas to satisfy a track requirement, while also maintaining the individual majors for those students wishing to solely pursue only one of the majors.

We fully expect the increased flexibility in programs, broadened career options, and high-paying positions to increase diversity within our programs.

- 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 FMK and ISM programs perform joint research currently, with multiple studies and webinars already in progress involving both programs. As stated previously, the industry sees these two programs as interconnected. Creative activity should benefit in regards to multi-class projects and solutions. Scope of research amongst all four programs will need to be determined, but creative activity can happen quickly, where research contributing to the body of knowledge of all four areas could be undertaken at WMU- uniquely positioning WMU as leaders in cross-disciplinary research.

Additionally, both FMK and ISM have a Center of Excellence. The Centers are closely aligned and faculty from each are already cross-collaborating.

- 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?

As found in the analog programs researched, universities have been able to use offering “tracks” as a way to offer commonality in courses up to a certain point, then allow flexibility to the student to branch into a track of their choice. It takes away the difficulty of declaring double majors or minors for the student, while aggregating common classes at the “before track” level. Ideally, the students would declare their major, then have options for multiple tracks. These tracks would consist of common platforms, with specialization at the 3000 or 4000 level. In all cases, initially at least, all tracks would be formed by grouping existing courses into commonly-themed tracks available to all majors.

The benefits for stakeholders are outlined as:

Students: more flexibility in learning; more career skills to address demand in key markets (CPG); reduction in redundant classes; faster paths to graduation.

Faculty: Better alignment with faculty expertise and classes.

Administration: Reduction in redundancy allows for streamlined course loads; more satisfied students, parents, and stakeholders.

- 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?

In all cases, existing courses will be combined to form a track, until demand exceeds capacity continuously. By informing freshmen and sophomores, and their advisors, of the opportunities for tracks, the required electives can be used for track fulfillment. With the need for Principles courses before taking these classes, a student in the school will more than likely have satisfied the Principles courses; so will have less additional classes needed than when taking a track in another school. When taking a track in another school (i.e. a Food Marketing major taking a Product and Packaging Design track), Principles courses will necessarily need to be taken.

By opening these courses to other majors and schools, billable hours and throughput per faculty member should be increased.

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

PD2- Design Processes
Special Topics
PD4- Design Drawing

Nutrition and Dietetics:
FCS1650 Culinary Skills

FCS2660 Personal Nutrition
FCS4740 Global Food Systems and Sustainability
FCS5820 Food Nutrition and Climate Change
FCS 4720 Farm to Table and Sustainability

Integrated Supply Management:

Classes TBD

These tracks would be available for students in all four areas.

8. Contact

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