

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?

Many faculty members teach cross-listed courses, drawing on students from a variety of majors & strengthening interdisciplinarity within colleges. However, various logistical issues add to the burden for instructors of teaching such cross-listed courses & discourage their use:

A. E-learning defaults to treating each section of a cross-listed course as an entirely separate course, with separate gradebooks, mailing lists, & content. The process for asking Academic Technology to merge courses is complex and unintuitive, often requiring multiple rounds of communication. Furthermore, the process erases all existing uploaded content for either section of the course. This proposal recommends that cross-listed courses be automatically treated as 1 course with merged lists and content, with students labeled by home department – e.g., HIST or GWS. Instructors could opt out of this default if they desired to have separate E-learning sites for their courses.

B. When the registrar is assigning classrooms for cross-listed courses, they default to assigning either only 1 room, presuming the class size of a single course, or 2 separate rooms. This often results in a room with insufficient space for the full number of students enrolled in both sections. By considering the total number of students in a cross-listed course, the Registrar can more efficiently allocate room spaces and avoid crowding issues.

C. It is increasingly desirable for faculty teaching new courses to actively publicize and do outreach. For cross-listed courses, it is often difficult to publicize these new courses outside the home dept, due to a lack of access to student lists, advisors, or departmental social media. This proposal suggests all new cross-listed courses be circulated to all advisors and all relevant departments, with supplemental material like fliers brief teaser videos -This will help boost awareness and enrollment across multiple depts for cross-listed courses & can be expanded to older courses.

- 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?

This change would potentially impact all departments and units that teach cross-listed courses, especially programs and institutes (Global and International Studies, IIAS, Medieval Institute, the Walker Center, etc...). Ideally, it would also become easier to teach cross-listed courses across different colleges, such as courses in both the School of Fine Arts and the College of Arts and Sciences.

- 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?

This would improve and streamline the process of cross-listed courses without impinging upon academic freedom; it might therefore make the prospect of teaching cross-listed courses more appealing to faculty, which would improve interdisciplinarity. It would likely increase enrollment in cross-listed courses as well, through reducing the inefficiencies of allocated spaces (see below) and improving communication between instructors and students. The bookstore should also have a unified list of required texts for cross-listed courses, which would help streamline the curriculum. Reducing barriers for both instructors and students will promote inclusion.

- 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?

This proposal is purely curricular and is unrelated to research or creative activity; thus, this question is irrelevant for the particular proposal. Some curricular grants might be potentially possible regarding funding.

- 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?

There would be no direct financial cost savings, but a substantial amount of faculty and staff time and energy would be saved, while redundancies would be eliminated.

D. In the cases of courses with limited enrollment, the current system for dividing up available spaces between different departments sharing a cross-listed course is ad hoc; it often results in lengthy and somewhat contentious negotiations between Chairs, as well as inefficiencies in which sometimes courses under-enroll despite demand due to misallocations between departments. This competition may only become more zero-sum after the adoption of the SRM model, to the detriment of student education and overall efficiencies. This proposal suggests that the relevant assistant deans and curriculum committees develop a standardized model for allocation of seats for cross-listed courses between departments, favoring the originating instructor's department, and that reallocation of seats depending on student demand be possible within the first week of the semester and more flexible than the current restrictions.

- 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?

This would ideally increase the number of cross-listed courses without increasing workload; it would decrease the workload for both faculty and administrative staff in eliminating duplicative

work at the beginning of the semester. It would also hopefully increase enrollment in those courses and reduce under-enrolled courses or the false appearance of such courses.

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

Cross-listed courses are an existing, simple way to build interdisciplinarity across units; this proposal suggests ways to make them simpler and more appealing to both faculty and students as well as publicizing them better and making their structure more efficient.

8. Contact

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