Substantial Change From General Education to Integrative Learning

I. Department, School, Title of Major or Minor
Institute of Transdisciplinary Studies
General Education Program

II. Description of Change
Alignment of existing general education program with current university principles by renaming the program to integrative learning, realigning existing courses into clusters based on five of the six principles, and adjusting selected courses. This proposal was developed by Nageswar Chekuri, Douglas Cremer, Paul Decker, Anne Ehrlich, Will McConnell and Behnoush McKay, and with the collaboration of Phyllis Cremer, Vic Liptak, Rich Matzen, David Rosen, and Randy Stauffer.

III. Rationale – Program fit with university mission
This redesign of the general education program into an integrative learning plan has been the result of efforts underway for the past three years. Students, faculty and staff, especially those in the Student Success Task Force, have all been involved in this process and many have contributed their insights, passions, and expertise. The result is a plan that responds effectively to the revised 2007 strategic plan’s call for the further development of our common vision and institutional identity. This general learning plan does so by creating concrete structures for the realization of that vision, by providing a path for academic programs to become learning-centered, including the development of specific learning objectives aligned with institution-wide learning goals, and by furthering the integration of co-curricular and curricular experiences and learning.

IV. Justification - Need for change
Based on the university’s Six Principles adopted in 2006 (and taking Academic Quality as the sum of the whole), five educational clusters corresponding to the remaining five principles (Innovation and Creativity, Communication, Transdisciplinarity, Social Responsibility and the Integrated Student) are to be established. Each cluster is based on one principle as well as aligned to the general learning objectives derived from the AAC&U’s publication Our Students’ Best Work and adopted by the university in 2005. Each cluster has five basic learning objectives designed for it that may be adapted for individual courses and assessment strategies. This combination of sources results in a restatement of the related principle in terms connected to the related integrative learning objectives (see section VI. A. Goals).
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This approach to defining the integrative learning goals of the university as well as the common curriculum for all university students was also developed over the past three years following student focus group responses concerning learning outside the classroom, faculty learning communities’ reflections in developing teaching portfolios, and a combined faculty, staff and student learning community that explored general education ideals, practice and structures. These communities, specifically looked at how to make the curriculum more relevant, stimulating and engaging by examining their own experiences, the relevant literature, and various models form other colleges and universities, including James Madison University, Chapman University, CSU Sonoma and CSU Monterey Bay, Trinity University, Emerson College, Washington State University, and Mills College, to name a few (see Gen Ed Learning Communities Summary, created by the faculty, staff and student learning communities on general education held in February 2008).

Across the institution, and especially in a reformed general education, we realize that we need to accomplish several things:

1) Objectives of sequential courses have to be created from a common template and integrated so that the learning of one is essential for success in another and skills and learning are successfully transferred.

2) Courses have to be consciously designed so that the goals of integrative learning are explicitly required and demonstrably used in student performance and its evaluation.

3) Students who begin their college education at the university have to be introduced to a process that genuinely integrates the overall educational goals of the university with those of their specific program.

4) Transfer students have to be brought into the university’s general education program in more than a purely instrumental manner of credit counting and requirement fulfillment and students may have to complete courses that are unique to the culture and practice of the university no matter where they transfer from.

5) Explicit connections must be made between the various dimensions of a student’s life and education, so that learning transcends setting and context and the non-classroom activities of students become opportunities for learning.

6) First-year, mid-career, and culminating courses rooted in the ideals of integrative learning and tied to specific objectives have to be designed in order to integrate the curriculum, make it purposeful and meaningful, and provide common assessment points for all students regardless of major.
These objectives cannot be accomplished all at once. The current proposal establishes the framework and foundation for such changes, which must be worked out collaboratively by the faculty involved over a period of time.

V. Implications
A. for Department and School
For the Institute of Transdisciplinary Studies and its several departments (Art History, Interdisciplinary Studies, Mathematics and Natural Sciences, Politics and History and Writing), who carry about 80% of the instructional course work, scheduling and assessment in both the current general education program and the proposed integrative learning plan, the change involves a reorientation of curricular goals and outcomes explicitly around both renewed departmental objectives and the new integrative learning objectives. This is to be accomplished through the curricular review and assessment plans of each department as well as an assessment plan for the integrative learning program as a whole (see section VI. B. Assessment)

B. for other Departments and Schools
For other departments that assist in the work of both the current general education program and the proposed integrative learning plan (Animation, Architecture, Fashion Design, Interior Architecture, and Graphic Design for Art History courses, Communication and Psychology for humanities and social science courses), the change also involves a reorientation of curricular goals and outcomes explicitly around both renewed departmental objectives and the new integrative learning objectives. This is to be accomplished through the curricular review and assessment plans of each department as well as an assessment plan for the integrative learning program as a whole.

For all these units, as well as the Office of Student Development that is included in this reform, it promises a greater integration and sense of common purpose revolving around the university’s principles, leading to greater collaboration and cooperation across disciplines and shared responsibility for the integrative learning of all students.
VI. Goals and Outcomes

A. Goals

Cluster One: Innovation and Creativity

Innovation and Creativity rely not only on the reception and use of diverse, intercultural forms of knowing and making, but on collaboration and problem solving as well. They are oriented to the future but draw from the past, focused on expression but drawn out of reflection. They exist not in a vacuum, but are fostered by a democratic community and informed by a global society.

Basic Learning Objectives:

1) Perceive the differences between received knowledge and new ideas
2) Examine diverse approaches to creating innovative works and ideas
3) Apply intercultural knowledge in collaborative situations to solve problems
4) Create new, forward-looking analyses and projects
5) Evaluate ideas, solutions and works in light of cultural differences, local communities and global consequences.

Cluster Two: Communication

Communication, to be both good and effective, requires fundamental literacies and skills, not only in reading, writing and speaking at a sophisticated level, but also in information handling, quantitative reasoning, and logical analysis. It needs produce works that are well-versed in the expanding diversity of forms and media, audiences and modes, from the electronic to the physical, the visual to the textual.

Basic Learning Objectives:

1) Perceive a range of means, methods and media that address multiple issues
2) Examine how different content is received by diverse audiences
3) Apply strong analytical, information, and quantitative skills to various communicative contexts
4) Create oral, physical, visual and/or written works that advance understanding
5) Evaluate the reciprocal effect of diverse strategies on communicators and audiences.
Cluster Three: Transdisciplinarity

Transdisciplinarity begins with the complex problems confronting our contemporary world and seeks out solutions from among all relevant disciplines and practices. It is an inherently collaborative, unavoidably engaging, and incredibly diverse experience that values multiple levels of knowing and analysis. It draws from various disciplines and inter-disciplines in new ways to address new and pressing issues in our natural, social and cultural worlds.

Basic Learning Objectives:

1) Perceive that solutions to complex problems require an understanding of the interdependence of diverse forms of knowing.
2) Examine the natural, social, and cultural realms through the hands-on inquiry practices of multiple disciplines.
3) Apply concepts and methods from the natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, and arts as appropriate to the problem at hand.
4) Create collaborative approaches and analyses that reveal new problems and frame new solutions.
5) Evaluate the effectiveness of the collaborative process and resulting solution.

Cluster Four: Social Responsibility

Social Responsibility demands the development of a self-reflective personal code of ethics embedded in the principles of respect, justice, and mutuality. The interrelations and connections between personal commitments and civic actions, not only cannot be avoided; they have increasingly significant consequences for the planet and its peoples. The acceptance of this condition and the proactive duty to confront its diverse implications, personally and communally, mark the contemporary global citizen.

Basic Learning Objectives:

1) Perceive the impacts of individual and social actions on the planet, its people and the environment.
2) Examine the connections among knowledge, skills, values and public action.
3) Apply the principles of sustainability and social justice to individual, civic and social choices and contexts.
4) Create proactive analyses and projects that engage civic and ethical decision-making.
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5) Evaluate his/her roles, responsibilities and actions as an educated global citizen.

Cluster Five: The Integrated Student

The Integrated Student understands that life and work are inseparable, that one’s goals and standards as a professional are directly related to one’s passions and values as a person, and that it is one’s own personal responsibility to create and sustain the connections between. Transferring the learning and abilities developed through one’s education into and across one’s future path is an essential part of creating a healthy and productive life.

Basic Learning Objectives:

1) Perceive the significance of habits of mind that foster a holistic sense of being and purpose.
2) Examine the integral connections among personal and professional activities for oneself and others.
3) Apply skills and knowledges learned from other sources to real life issues and situations.
4) Create self-reflective work in which the student takes primary responsibility for framing questions and defining values.
5) Evaluate the complexity and consistency of a personally adopted long-term set of values.

A Power Point version of this section, as well as some introductory language, can be found in Gen_Ed_to_Int_Learn_Presentation.ppt

B. Assessment
The structure of assessment is based on each cluster. The clusters are governed by a small team of three or four faculty drawn from those teaching courses in the cluster, a member of the administrative staff, and one student. These team members are also members of the Student Success Task Force and collectively oversee the entire Integrative Learning Plan. They will, in conjunction with the curriculum committee, approve courses for fulfillment of cluster requirements, both existing and new courses. They will oversee how existing courses will be redesigned in terms of outcomes and assignments to align with their dual position within their existing disciplines and as part of the new clusters. They will also devise an assessment plan with annual reports and conduct a program

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review of the cluster in the year of the particular principle, with a summative review of all clusters conducted in 20013-14, the year of Academic Quality.

Assessment will also be based on a holistic scoring rubric developed for each of the five clusters and their governing principle. The rubric may be used and adapted for use in individual courses, in groups of courses, or even to examine how another department’s programs may be fulfilling the goals of the integrative learning principles (See Integrative Learning Assessment Rubric).

C. Curricular map
The courses that will make up these five clusters will be drawn from the current constellation of general education courses, which until now have been rooted in particular disciplines or inter-disciplines. With the implementation of this plan, those that the faculty members in their respective disciplines select to continue as courses in the integrative learning plan will gradually be revised and refashioned. This will be done in light of their dual position as part of a specific learning cluster with fundamental learning objectives and as part of the wider disciplinary or interdisciplinary community of which they have always partaken. Not all courses that meet the current general education plan will, or will have to, meet the new objectives and cluster requirements. That is for the faculty in those disciplines to decide. This change, however, will require little change in the outward form (or the number required by specific programs and majors), but a substantial internal re-working: aligning objectives, developing assignments, shifting pedagogies, and making assessments. At least two of a course’s learning objectives must be clearly based on the cluster’s learning objectives. Many of our courses (and faculty) have already moved significantly down this road. Courses may carry the same designations, but the experience of students and faculty alike will be transformed, and the possibility of new courses (and co-curricular experiences) in fulfillment of the cluster’s learning objectives will be greatly enhanced.

The one significant change from the current course structure is that the two upper-division courses that are electives in the current system have become cluster culmination courses. This transformation serves two purposes: they serve as integrating experiences for students preparing them for work in their major capstone; they provide a ‘milestone’ assessment opportunity for the faculty to see the results of student learning.

They also provide, along with the first-year orientation course, required anchors throughout the curriculum that will facilitate coordination between faculty and
staff advisors, who have been reorganized into a first-year advisor, a second/third-year advisor, and a fourth/fifth-year advisor. Students will be required to take their upper-division courses from different clusters, covering at least two of the five with a culminating experience. Both of these courses will be required of all students, including transfer students, and transfer credit will not be accepted.

The distribution of existing courses across the clusters (as opposed to the current disciplinary distribution) has been created (see Clustercourses_Lower_Division.pdf and Clustercourses_Upper_Division.pdf). Curriculum maps of each department’s courses have been made in order to assist in creating this distribution (see contents of Curriculum_Maps folder). The department chairs of Art History, Communication, Interdisciplinary Studies, Mathematics and Natural Sciences, Politics and History, Psychology and Writing have met (twice in a group since January 22, 2009 and several times individually and by e-mail, up until February 23, 2009) to determine the distribution of courses based on the information from the curricular maps. The slotting of courses to appropriate clusters (in essence the translation of the current disciplinary distribution into clusters), was undertaken with the preservation of current agreements between the general education curriculum and the individual majors who are dependent upon them in mind, as well as the following considerations:

* All courses may be present in two clusters save for the individually required AW 111 and AW 112, CO 105 and 120 and the MA courses from the current system (which are maintained) and appear only in one cluster, or may appear once at the offering department’s discretion.

* The current requirement for one laboratory science and one art history are preserved as well, preserving elements of IGETC and still hopefully doing justice to the clusters

* Courses of the same department are generally kept together with a few minor exceptions, and even when separated, each course only appears in two clusters.

* Keeping a relative balance of units required across the clusters, keeping within the 47 units in the current GE (when one includes CO 105 and PD 100), allowing for the preservation of major-required GE courses

* Upper division courses align with the lower division courses of the same
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department, generally, thus easing assessment

* Departments decided on the cluster to which the majority of their courses were aligned through their curriculum map.

The departments aligned generally as follows:
AW: communication, integrated student
BH: transdisciplinarity, social responsibility
CO: communication, integrated student
EC: social responsibility, integrated student
FN: communication, innovation and creativity (includes accompanying design history courses)
IS: innovation and creativity, transdisciplinarity, social responsibility (core only), integrated student (core only)
LI: innovation and creativity, integrated student
MA: communication
PH: innovation and creativity, social responsibility
PO: transdisciplinarity, social responsibility/innovation and creativity (split) (upper-division only)
PS: transdisciplinarity, integrated student
SC (physical): innovation and creativity, social responsibility
SC (biological): transdisciplinarity, integrated student

The result is a foundation for a transformation of general education into integrative learning, transitioning from a disciplinary distribution model to one based on the university’s principles and the learning outcomes associated with them. The working of these principles and outcomes on the courses will transform them from the inside out; it will bring faculty, staff and students into a collaborative relationship concerning students’ integrative learning.

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VII. Enrollment Projections
Enrollment numbers should remain as they have been for general education courses as a whole, approximately 800 students enrolled in all courses per academic semester (160 FTE per semester).

VIII. Resources - Indicate whether existing or new
A. Faculty - Qualifications and hiring plans. If existing faculty indicate which course will be given up to teach this course.
Existing faculty in current academic programs are sufficient for this change. Future elaborations of this structure will affect future demands on faculty growth.

B. Staff - Will additional staff need to be hired?
No

C. Library - Existing collection capacity and plans to support with additional acquisitions
No additional resources beyond those normally supporting the current general education program will be immediately required. Additional resources supporting faculty development in the pedagogies of communication, innovation and creativity, transdisciplinarity, social responsibility and the integrated student will be required.

D. Capacity Infrastructure
1. Facilities - What space will be used and how will that be accommodated within existing use or planned expansion?
No new space needs

2. Technology - What additional computers, software or equipment are required?
No technology needs required beyond existing resources

E. Budget/Financial Implications - Indicate any new funds required.
None immediately. The implementation of further elaborations on the plan may require targeted faculty hires.

IX. Appendices
A. Major Worksheet - showing course levels and sequencing
A visual guide to the clusters and their respective courses is under development.

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B. Course Information- Course names, and descriptions, major or minor requirement or, elective, number or level of course, e.g. 2xx, units, prerequisites, lecture or studio, number of sections per year.
The majority of courses remain with their existing departmental and numeric significations.

C. Curriculum Vitae - key faculty and other participants if full time
All faculty in the Institute of Transdisciplinary Studies, as well as select faculty in the School of Architecture (History and Theory) and the School of Media, Culture and Design) are currently and will remain involved in the program.

D. Course Syllabi - inclusion of all required components as follows:
• Course Description • Evaluation Criteria
• Learning Objectives • Grading Procedure
• Prerequisites • Required Materials
• Required Texts • Course Schedule
• Instructional Process • Course Guidelines/Policies
• List of Assignments • Attendance Policy

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