Expected Outcomes: Knowledge of Interdisciplinary Theory, Application

Graduates will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the theory behind interdisciplinary approaches to complex problems and will understand how to approach complex problems. The intent is to combine expertise in selected subject areas with informed knowledge of contemporary social and global issues. Students from the program should have enhanced problem solving skills and the increased intercultural knowledge necessary for adapting to an ever-changing global marketplace.

Assessment methods

Method: Completion of UNIV 2190 with a C or better.

UNIV 2190 introduces fundamental concepts of interdisciplinary theory with strong emphasis on career exploration. Students conceptualize their own interdisciplinary goals. Three exams evaluate how well students assimilate this information. Students produce a plan of study, goal statement, career research paper, autobiographical map and short essay, evaluate interdisciplinary case studies presented in the class and begin collecting information for an e-portfolio. In order to be admitted to the degree program students must make a C or better in the class and submit their plan of study and goal statement with appropriate faculty advisor signatures and approval by a faculty mentor. The goal statement must be clear, concise, related to the coursework included in the plan and explain why the plan is interdisciplinary.

Findings:

The textbook used in UNIV 2190, 'Becoming Interdisciplinary: An Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies' by T. Augsburg (Kendall Hunt, 2000, 2nd ed.), is not ideal. The Director of IDSC attended the 34th Annual Association for Integrative Studies meeting held in Rochester Michigan in October, 2012 and is currently reviewing an alternative text book.

How did you use findings for improvement?

The Director of IDSC attended the 34th Annual Association for Integrative Studies meeting held in Rochester Michigan in October, 2012 and is currently reviewing an alternative text book.

Additional comments:

In general, the course seems to adequately accomplish the goals. We have made small changes each semester in response to our observations and based on feedback from the students. The Director, in consultation with the Faculty Advisory Committee, will be presenting proposed revisions to the University Curriculum Committee before the end of 2012.

Expected Outcomes: Enhanced oral, written and computer skills.

All students admitted to the program are required to take an oral communications class (usually COMM 1000--Introduction to Public Speaking), a computer competency class (usually COMP 1000--Personal Computer Applications) and an upper-level English composition course (ENGL 3040--Technical Writing, 3080 Business Writing, or 4000--Advanced Composition). In addition, there are multiple writing assignments in UNIV 2190 and all Capstone courses have a written component. Students are
required to conduct interviews with professionals in their areas of interest and meet with faculty to discuss their plan of study as they move through UNIV 2190 towards admission to the program.

**Assessment methods**

**Method**: Completion of supporting coursework and UNIV 2190.

All IDSC students must complete an oral communications course, a computer competency course and an advanced writing course and UNIV 2190 with a grade of C or better. All students are encouraged to excel, but the assumption is made that a grade of at least a C indicates adequate performance in each of these courses. Students are expected to use the skills developed in these courses as they progress through the major. Students must conduct two professional interviews, incorporate the information from these interviews into a research paper containing data on salaries and employment opportunities. They must present this information to the class. They also present their autobiographical map to the class, thus incorporating the public speaking and computer skills into their coursework. The assignments are designed to emphasize the importance of these communication and computer skills.

**Findings**:  
Most students do well with the oral communications course and the upper level composition course. The computer competency course is not popular and students generally express frustration with it. The assignments in UNIV 2190 offer students the opportunity to submit iterative versions of several assignments and requires them to conduct interviews with what are typically total strangers. We have strengthened our attention to deadlines and following instruction and students are generally paying more attention to the assignments and putting more effort into them.

**How did you use findings for improvement?**

Some of the students have been hesitant about approaching faculty or conducting the professional interviews. During 2011 students indicated that one interview was insufficient and so we now require at least two interviews. We are exploring options that would replace the computer competency class. We are slated to be in the second wave of programs participating in the e-portfolio QEP project. We are exploring the possibility of incorporating the acquisition of computer skills into the development of an e-portfolio.

**Additional comments:**

none

**Expected Outcomes**: Creation of a unique program of study.

The program of study must include a goal statement explaining the interdisciplinary objectives of the student and referencing specific courses. The plan includes supporting coursework common to all IDSC students and either two or three emphasis areas each made up of coursework selected to meet the student’s goals. Each plan must include a capstone course involving an internship, service learning project or thesis research paper that integrates the emphasis areas in the plan.

**Assessment methods**

**Method**: Approval of submitted plan of study and goal state

Completion of the plan of study involves interaction with faculty advisors, academic advisors, and a faculty mentor. Once the plan has been completed, it is submitted to the Director of the IDSC undergraduate degree program. The plan is evaluated to ensure the student has a truly interdisciplinary plan approved by the appropriate faculty advisors and the mentor. Plans
appearing to be a collection of random, unconnected classes are rejected. The goal statement is key to determining whether a plan is truly interdisciplinary. The Program has a Faculty Advisory Committee or Review Board and in cases where the Director is unsure the plan warrants approval or in cases where students with more than 90 hours are seeking an exception allowing them into the program the Board determines if admission into the program is warranted. Plans that are inadequate are returned to students who have the option to revise and resubmit for reconsideration.

Findings:

Increased emphasis on the goal statement in UNIV 2190 and iterative submissions of the the plan and the goal statement have increased the quality of plans submitted. The requirement that each student have a faculty mentor is becoming a burden on faculty in units across campus. In some cases, departments have indicated difficulty in providing the upper level courses needed by IDSC majors. Maintaining clear and organized records has been cumbersome because the process was all done by paper.

How did you use findings for improvement?

We are reviewing alternatives to the mentor requirement (any change will require approval by the University Curriculum Committee). We have worked with several departments to develop lists of courses that will be open to IDSC students. Development of a Share Point site for all student application materials is nearly completed. The review process will employ this resource and this should streamline review, notification and capstone syllabus approval.

Additional comments:

Participation in the 34th Annual Association for Integrative Studies meeting has provided some useful ideas to address these problems in a meaningful way. Also helped develop a list of contacts who are providing review and input to the Director.

Expected Outcomes: Increased faculty-student interaction.

Each student must develop a program of study tailored to meet his or her educational and professional goals. The student must develop the program of study in consultation with faculty advisors in appropriate fields of study. The student must also identify and work with a faculty mentor in the finalization of the program of study and in development of the capstone course.

Assessment methods

Method: Approval of final application materials, syllabus

Completion of the plan of study, goal statement and capstone syllabus involves interaction with faculty advisors, academic advisors, and a faculty mentor.

Findings:

Many students struggle to put their goals into words and to integrate the goal statement with their plan of study. They also may be hesitant to approach faculty to discuss their goals and get their plan approved. Some academic units have restrictions of the courses available to our students and we continue to have a significant number of students with more than 90 hours who have an interest in this program. A number of students have held onto their application materials for 2-3 semesters after taking UNIV 2190 while working off of a plan that has not been approved.

How did you use findings for improvement?
There are multiple opportunities for the student to submit their plan of study and goal statement during UNIV 2190. This provides feedback and opportunities to refine the documents prior to final submission. We continue to emphasize the need to behave professionally when approaching faculty advisors. We are exploring alternatives to the faculty advisor/mentor model that puts an undue burden on academic units. We are going to institute a mandatory 1 semester between admission to the program and the semester in which the capstone course is taken.

Additional comments:

None

Expected Outcomes: Articulation and achievement of educational goals.

Students must be able to articulate their personal career goals, work with faculty advisors to develop a plan of study that will facilitate reaching these goals, and complete a capstone class that brings all parts of the plan together. During the Fundamentals of Interdisciplinary Studies course (UNIV 2190) students must identify, contact and interview at least two people working in a field related to the one they aspire to. The student must incorporate the information obtained in these interviews into a career paper in which they discuss the opportunities and requirements associated with their professional goals.

Assessment methods

Method: Admission to and completion of the program.

Students must be able to articulate their educational and professional goals in order to be admitted to the program. Once admitted, they must be able to complete the appropriate coursework, identify and complete the capstone course, graduate and get a job.

Findings:

Increased emphasis on the goal statement and on development of the capstone syllabus in UNIV 2190 has improved the quality of the application materials and the capstone syllabi. Some students still have problems articulating their goals. The Faculty Review Committee has provided critical commentary on application materials.

How did you use findings for improvement?

Students who have trouble getting their goals articulated are invited to work with the Career Counselor to improve their application materials. The Faculty Review Committee provides feedback on application materials and on career goals and students are provided with this feedback and given the opportunity to revise their materials.

Additional comments:

None

Expected Outcomes: Application of integrated knowledge.

Each student must complete a capstone course. The course will be either a thesis research paper (UNIV 4930) or an internship or service learning experience (UNIV 4980). The student must apply his or her knowledge of the interdisciplinary approach to the selected option. The capstone course should adequately recognize all academic areas the student has completed as part of the degree. The mentor and the student develop the course syllabus in consultation with each other.

Assessment methods
**Method:** Capstone Course--UNIV 4930 or 4980

The capstone course is intended to integrate the knowledge obtained in the major coursework during the completion of the degree. Students are required to complete the capstone towards the end of their degree program. They work with a mentor to develop a syllabus for either the thesis option or the internship/service learning option. All capstone syllabi are evaluated by the Faculty Review Board. The capstone syllabus must outline work that reflects an integration of the emphases in the student’s plan of study. The Review Board expects to see a significant written component as part of the capstone workload even if the student opts to do the internship/service learning option.

**Findings:**

The Capstone course is very popular with many of our students. Some students already know what they want to do for their capstone before they are admitted to the program. Others struggle with the integration of their emphases into a single capstone course.

**How did you use findings for improvement?**

We have tried to strongly emphasize the need for integration as we teach the students about the capstone syllabus requirements during UNIV 2190. We encourage students to approach their mentors with at least a framework for the syllabus. This puts more responsibility on the student and lightens the workload for the mentor.

**Additional comments:**

none.