

**Annual Assessment Report 2008-2009 and Assessment Plan 2009-2010**  
**MA/MS Interdisciplinary Studies Program**  
California State University, Stanislaus

**Mission, Goals, Objectives**

**Mission**

The MA/MS Interdisciplinary Studies Program serves students whose academic interests and professional needs do not fit within traditional master's degree programs. Each Interdisciplinary Studies student custom-designs a course of study, combining two or more disciplines into a program with a distinct, coherent theme. The program is designed for exceptional, individual cases and provides an opportunity for self-directed learning and an educational experience specifically relevant to a student's unique needs.

**Six Graduate School Learning Goals**

- a. Advanced knowledge, skills, and values appropriate to the discipline.
- b. Ability to be creative, analytical, critical thinkers.
- c. Ability to work as individual researchers/scholars as well as in collaboration with others in contributing to the scholarship of their disciplines, as appropriate.
- d. Relevant knowledge of the global perspectives appropriate to the discipline.
- e. Knowledge of new and various methods and technologies as appropriate to the discipline.
- f. Advanced oral and written communication skills, complemented, as appropriate to the discipline, by the ability to access and analyze the information from a myriad of primary, print, and technological sources.

**Program Student Learning Goals**

A student in the Interdisciplinary Studies program is expected to demonstrate:

Competence in Interdisciplinary Studies

1. Advanced knowledge of the disciplinary knowledge, skills and values of their interdisciplinary study, the relationships among these disciplinary courses, and the ways in which these disciplinary perspectives are integrated and transformed through interdisciplinary studies.
2. Ability to analyze complex issues, draw reasoned conclusions, and evaluate effectiveness of proposed solutions to problems.
3. Understanding of global perspectives appropriate to the disciplines.

### Communication

4. Ability to write effectively in a variety of written and quantitative formats appropriate to the disciplines and the differing audiences and contexts.
5. Ability to express ideas orally, with attention to audience and effectiveness of delivery.
6. Advanced oral and written communication skills, complemented by ability to access and analyze information from a myriad of primary, print, and technological sources.

### Research and Scholarship

7. Advanced knowledge of research and scholarship appropriate to the interdisciplinary study.
8. Ability to work as individual researchers/scholars as well as in collaboration with others in contributing to the scholarship of interdisciplinary studies.

### **Curriculum Map**

Interdisciplinary Studies students design, in consultation with their advisors, individual programs of study. Therefore, there is no curriculum map for the Interdisciplinary Studies Program.

### **Assessment Report 2008-09**

#### **❖ What measures were used this year to determine that graduates have achieved the stated program learning objectives?**

##### **➤ Identify evaluators (e.g., Accreditation, External Reviewers).**

During academic year 2008-2009, the primary evaluators included the student program faculty (three faculty members participate in each student's program), the Program Director, and the thesis readers employed through the University Library.

##### **➤ Identify direct measures of student learning (e.g., assessments that are based on actual student work - tests, essays, thesis, and presentations).**

During the academic year 2008-2009, the Interdisciplinary Studies Program conducted direct assessment of student learning through review of theses/projects. The Program Director and the faculty members participating in the student's individual program, perform formative assessment at time of review of the thesis/project prospectus. Summative assessment occurs near the end of the program, when program faculty evaluate students in an oral thesis/project defense and evaluate the written document. Thesis/project readers then evaluate the theses/projects before bindery.

- **Identify indirect measures of student learning (e.g., assessments that are based on perceptions of student learning - surveys, interviews, focus groups, and course or program student evaluations).**

Indirect methods of student learning were not implemented during academic year 2008-2009.

- ❖ **How did the program interpret the evidence found from each of the measures listed above? What was the process for interpreting the evidence?**

- **Discuss when, how, and through what process program faculty analyzed the data collected.**

Identified strengths and weaknesses of theses/projects were shared between the Program Director and thesis readers. At the end of the academic year, there was a transition in program directors. Collective findings were shared between the previous director and the current director, and these findings have been shared with the Interdisciplinary Studies Committee, the faculty committee responsible for approving program policies and procedures, as well as individual student programs proposed. While evaluation of the theses/projects has been rigorous to this point, the process was not formalized and was not deliberately linked to the program goals.

- **Describe the process for discussion and use of findings. What efforts were used during the past year to involve faculty and constituencies in assessment processes?**

The Interdisciplinary Studies Program is governed by the Interdisciplinary Studies Committee, and meets quarterly. Membership includes the Program Director (committee chair), and five faculty from different disciplines across campus. In May, 2009, the committee discussed evidence related to theses/projects gathered to that point, which suggested that the program needed a formalized method that provides evidence of how well the students are meeting specific learning goals.

- ❖ **Describe successful outcomes and any changes the program faculty have made or plan to make for improving student learning, curriculum, instruction delivery, and other elements of program effectiveness.**

The Interdisciplinary Studies Committee has just recently (September, 2009) approved a new formal evaluation process for theses/projects. Therefore, no programmatic decisions have yet been made based on data that will be collected from the assessment process.

- ❖ **If changes for improving the program or student learning were recommended, what resources will be needed to implement those changes effectively? What other challenges, if any, will impact the program's ability to effectively implement those changes?**

At this early point in the implementation of the assessment plan, it is not possible to project potential challenges or requisite resources for potential recommended changes.

## Assessment Plan for AY 2009-10

- ❖ **Describe the program assessment plan including its design and implementation.**
  - **Identify the program student learning objectives that will be assessed in the current plan and the rationale for assessing those objectives.**

The Interdisciplinary Studies Committee has opted to assess all six program outcomes annually. Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the program, the committee has determined that this will provide a more comprehensive view of student achievement each year. The Committee has developed rubrics for thesis and project evaluation that is linked to the program goals. The program will be utilizing external reviewers with financial support, as available, from the university's Office of Assessment and Quality Assurance.
  - **Identify and describe the indirect measures (e.g., assessments that are based on perceptions of student learning - surveys, interviews, focus groups, course or program student evaluations) and direct measures (e.g., assessments of actual student learning - tests, essays, thesis, and presentations) that will be used to assess the program student learning objectives.**

Indirect measures will include student responses to the university's Graduate Student Exit Survey.
  - **Identify how and when these measures will be implemented and the parties responsible for collecting and analyzing the data.**

At the end of each academic year, five completed Interdisciplinary Studies theses/projects (from that academic year) will be randomly selected for review. The program will employ three external reviewers to evaluate the theses/projects. Each reviewer will evaluate all five theses/projects, and each reviewer will use the committee-developed rubrics.
  - **Identify any other assessment activities that will be carried out to assess the program student learning objectives (e.g., meetings, workshops, consultation, funding requests).**

The Interdisciplinary Studies Committee plans to assess the effectiveness of the new program assessment plan following the first assessment cycle this academic year. The Committee will discuss potential changes to its plan in September, 2010.

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