Integrative Studies Discussions

Background

> In these increasingly complex times, "preparing" for one specific kind of work has become nearly impossible. Even the most advanced preparation, in many fields, might well be obsolete in only a few years after graduation…The student must also realize that one of the most sophisticated skills is being able to choose from plentiful resources and create integration around areas of learning." (Committee to Review the Undergraduate Experience [CRUE] Opportunities for Renewal Report, 1988).

The CRUE Report ushered in an era of Michigan State University's (MSU's) general education requirements that have the traditional expectations for writing and math, but place their heaviest concentration on integrative studies coursework. For the past two years, MSU faculty and staff have discussed ways to re-envision the Integrative Studies program in the context of the Institutional Learning Goals and associated Global Competencies (see attached). The University Committee on Liberal Learning (UCLL) recommended steps to focus MSU's Integrative Studies courses on global problems arising from the intersections of the arts and humanities, social sciences, and sciences, and based on these recommendations, the Directors of the three Integrative Studies Centers (Arts and Humanities, Social Science, and Science) along with the Associate Deans from the administering colleges have been meeting to generate a vision upon which learning experiences and assessment efforts could be designed. The following foundational principles have arisen from the discussions:

1. Integrative Studies (IS) should facilitate, in President Lou Anna K. Simon's words, "the ability of **every** academic discipline to reach beyond its own discourse community, engaging its **conceptual tools** and knowledge to address problems that concern the **world community at large.**" It should foster "a new conversation that speaks with a collective voice to address challenges confronting all nations and cultures."[1]

    Key elements:
    *   Learning in IS courses should be interdisciplinary - "work(s) across academic disciplines to **combine** the strengths of the humanities, social sciences, and the natural and applied sciences to combat complex problems requiring more than one approach."[2]
    *   Integration must occur not only between disciplines within the core colleges but also between colleges.
    *   Conceptual tools to address problems is an emphasis
    *   Real world, global context is highlighted.

2. IS should fulfill the Boldness by Design goals related to enhancing the student experience and internationalizing the curriculum for all students.

3. Courses should be learner-centered, rather than teacher-centered.[3]

---

[1] See http://www.worldgrantideal.msu.edu/_files/documents/monograph.pdf, page 12.
[2] Ibid, page 11.
[3] See Robert B. Barr and John Tagg, "From Teaching to Learning: A New Paradigm for Undergraduate Education," *Change* (Nov.-Dec. 1995): 12-25.

- Teaching-centered approach emphasizes coverage of content: coverage of content determines learning outcomes.
- Learning-centered approach emphasizes student learning outcomes: learning outcomes determine content coverage. (Backward Design)

4. The curriculum/courses should be developed with intentionality and coherence around a set of institutional learning goals and outcomes for integrative studies at Michigan State University.
   - The Institutional Learning Goals/Outcomes (LLG/O) and Global Competencies (GC), considered holistically, are themselves a set of integrative learning goals; therefore, the LLG/O and associated GC constitute the student learning outcomes for IS as a holistic program.

5. Teaching and learning in the program should reflect theory and practice related to teaching and learning pedagogy, students' cognitive development, and other literature related to global, interdisciplinary, and integrative teaching and learning.
   - Experiential learning opportunities (e.g., research opportunities, service learning, internships, work experience, study abroad, etc.) should be an aspect of the model.

6. A "pedagogy of the contemporary,"[4] which places the contemporary forces/developments (e.g., globalization, the digital revolution, the biological revolution) that are transforming societies, should be at the center of IS.
   - A "pedagogy of the contemporary" is situated in the present—contemporary learners facing contemporary problems and issues—is intellectually rigorous—with the disciplines serving as analytical lenses leveraging integration—and personally meaningful—engaging students in their own experience with the contemporary and legitimating their participation as active agents.

7. Faculty and curriculum development opportunities should be incorporated to ensure success.

8. There should be a well-defined program of learning outcomes assessment to ensure that the intended outcomes are achieved.

9. IS as the core of the curriculum should be vertically integrated throughout the undergraduate experience.

10. There should be meaningful linkages between IS and disciplinary learning that are transparent to the student.

11. We should consider language and development activities associated with changing the culture of advising related to IS.

12. Any eventual modification to IS must stay within the boundary guidelines established by the Provost:
    - Not result in a distribution model.
    - Not increase the costs, administrative structures, or complexity of the current system
    - Not increase the credit burden to students

---

[4] See Veronica Box Mansilla, "Integrative Learning: Setting the Stage for a Pedagogy of the Contemporary," *Peer Review* (Fall 2008): 31.

Components of Integrative Studies

Global – signifies a focus on topics, theories, and issues representing multiple places, cultures, worldviews, and contexts in a way that facilitates students' ability to:

- connect local and global contexts;
- understand their relative postions in the world as citizens and scholars;
- understand and interpret complex issues facing humans and the planet from diverse perspectives; and
- be open to and value—albeit not necessarily agree with—diverse opinions, perspectives, and ways of knowing

Integrative and Global connection:

- Both methods highlight that students need to learn concepts from multiple perspectives, both culturally-based and disciplinary-based.
- Both concepts suggest that students change their worldview by being exposed to multiple discourses and ways of knowing.
- Both concepts assume that students will be better thinkers and responsible global citizens by having access to multiple ways of knowing.

Global and Learning-centered connection:

- Both concepts call for the localization of information to make it relevant.
- Both concepts value what a students can learn and do with that learning, not what they can memorize or repeat.
- Both concepts signify a change in understanding or perspective—students do not just know more, they actually think and reflect in substantively different ways .

Global

Integrative

Learning-Centered
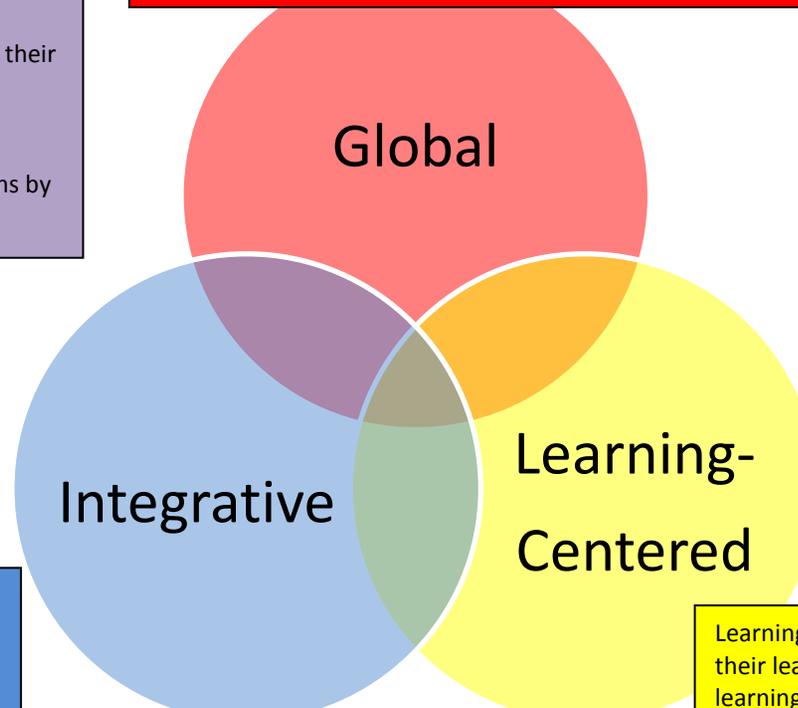
Integrative– signifies a purposeful inclusion of multiple "ways of knowing" (perspectives, habits of mind, disciplinary theories and methodologies) to help students to:

- engage with complex issues and ideas from multiple perspectives;
- understand that different groups define, frame, analyze, and solve problems in multiple ways; and
- analyze, evaluate, and reflect upon information from multiple frames of reference in order to act as globally responsible citizens.

Learning-centered and Integrative connection:

- Both concepts suggest a focus on ideas and theories that transcend a single content or disciplinary area.
- Both concepts suggest that problems and their solutions are complex and cannot be understood through facts in isolation or a single way of knowing.
- Both concepts call for faculty to be both learning facilitators and content experts

Learning-centered – signifies a focus on students and their learning, rather than faculty and content. A learning-centered curriculum is one that:

- employs student-centered pedagogies and techniques, including active, experiential, problem-based, and/or inquiry-based techniques;
- connects the content and discussion to students' lives in relevant ways;
- uses content and theories as a way for students to develop students' knowledge, attitudes, and skills in transferrable ways; and
- is led by faculty who are both learning facilitators and contents experts in their fields.

Pilot Studies

Integrative Studies Pilot

A cross-center initiative facilitated by the IS Center Directors that includes four faculty from each center who regularly teach IS courses and who are already "primed" for the GIS curricular concept (i.e., faculty recruited into the pilot project would already have some familiarity with the pedagogies of global learning and integrative learning). Initially, the group identified a sequence of IS courses that would be taught in 2013-2014 so that each center could schedule those courses as part of the regular academic year scheduling cycle. The group is collaboratively developing the curriculum for those courses through a series of regular meetings throughout 2012-2013. The ultimate intended outcome is 12 courses offered in 2013-2014 that pilot and assess the proposed Global Integrative Studies goals.

More specifically, the Global Integrative Studies pilot initiative focuses on two global themes that have the potential to attract faculty from each center and that align with existing IS courses: sustainability and social justice. In addition, we are particularly interested in developing courses that would correlate the global themes of sustainability and of social justice with issues like health and the environment and/or the university initiatives focused on food and water.

Method

a) Faculties from across the three centers collaborate to teach a course that focuses on a complex global challenge and integrates perspectives from the social sciences, humanities, and sciences. The minimum requirement for the courses are that they be:
     a. Learner Centered – defined to mean that they utilize a process of backward design beginning with a clearly defined set of learning outcomes that are linked to the global competencies.
     b. The topics for the courses should be situated in the present and intellectually rigorous – building student's cognitive understanding AND their ability to function as members of multidisciplinary teams, build professional networks, understand the perspectives of others, and communicate effectively across disciplinary and/or cultural boundaries.
     c. Faculty should be encouraged to develop and experiment with learning experiences that foster student's ability to achieve the outcomes through active/engaged pedagogies. This could include, but should not be limited to, such things as blended learning environments (combination of online and face-to-face), "flip" classrooms; inquiry based learning, experiential learning opportunities, etc.
     d. Assessment, both formative and summative, should be built into each course with the intent of: a) understanding student learning relative to the expected outcomes and b) enhance course design.
b) Course should be designed to creatively accommodate large numbers of students (>100)
c) Courses will be allowed to substitute for existing IS requirements.
d) Courses should be taught in FS13 and SS14

Expected Outcomes:

1. A demonstration of the ability of faculty to effectively collaborate to design and implement a new type of IS course that will lead to meaningful integration across the three IS Centers and challenge students to understand problems from differing perspectives.
2. Through innovative pedagogy and collaboration we can begin to achieve deep student learning across the defined set of global competencies and institutional learning goals.
3. That teaching in IS is rewarding, challenging, sought after, and is recognized as the place that links all aspects of the UG curriculum.
4. That we can create more flexibility in the total number of credits required in IS while enhancing the learning of all students.

Assessment

A team consisting of 6 individuals (1 tenured faculty, 1 fixed term faculty, 1 post-doc, and the 3 Center Directors) are: 1) Developing and implementing assessment tools that provide baseline data of student learning relative to the Institutional Learning Goals and Global Competencies as a result of the existing curriculum and 2) determine how this knowledge changes as a result of implementing redesigned IS courses.

Lyman Briggs College (See accompanying documents)