

SPECIAL REPORT
OF THE
ACADEMIC MATTERS, ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AND
PROGRAM AND BUDGET COUNCILS

concerning

CREATION OF A UNIVERSITY WITHOUT WALLS
DEPARTMENT OF INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES
(#7423)

Presented at the
804th Regular Meeting of the Faculty Senate
April 1, 2021

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

ACADEMIC MATTERS COUNCIL

Wesley Autio, Carol Barr, Carolyn Bassett, Bryan Beck, William Brown, Allison Butler, Marcy Clark, Elizabeth Connor, Morgan Donovan-Hall, Sharon Dormier, Janet Fink, Keisha Green, Jennifer Heuer, , Matthew Komer, Lt. Col. David Lemery, Mark Liberatore, Linda Lowry, Ruthanne Paradise, MJ Peterson, Sarah Pfatticher, Jennifer Randall, Caleb Rounds, Sylvia Salas, Tigran Sedrakyn, Barry Spence, Patrick Sullivan, Jack Wileden, Kate Woodmansee

ACADEMIC MATTERS RECOMMENDATION

The Academic Matters Council recommends approval of this proposal.

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES COUNCIL

Richard Bogartz, Steve Goodwin, Farshid Hajir, Deborah Henson, Piper Gaubatz, Sangeeta, Kamat, MJ Peterson, Catrine Tudor-Locke, Sarah Poissant, Atul Sheel, Janine Solberg, Christine Turner, Jack Wileden

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES RECOMMENDATION

The Academic Matters Council recommends approval of this proposal.

PROGRAM AND BUDGET COUNCIL

Zlatan Aksamija, Joseph Bartolomeo, Jeremiah Bentley, William Brown, D. Anthony Butterfield, Elizabeth Chang, Nancy Cohen, Patricia Galvis-Assmus, Sarah Goff, Steve Goodwin, Deborah Gould, Moira Inghilleri, Yoon Ju Kang, Andrew Mangels, Ernest May, Lynn McKenna, Anthony Paik, MJ Peterson, Alexander Phillips, Anurag Sharma, Lisa Wegiel

PROGRAM AND BUDGET COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION

The Program and Budget Council recommends approval of this proposal.

Briefly describe the Proposal:

Please see attached document and supporting memorandum.

**MOTION: That the Faculty Senate approve the Creation of a University Without Walls
30-21 Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, as presented in Sen Doc. No. 21-
058.**

research that demonstrates an ability to use primary and secondary sources, solve problems, and communicate effectively, Peer and instructor feedback will be integral to the learning process. Students will construct a plan of study that incorporates past coursework and experience. (Gen. Ed. I)

2) Two of the following Experiential Reflections courses:

UWW 310 Experiential Reflections of Technology

UWW 320 Experiential Reflections of Leadership

UWW 330 E

2) Theory and Practice. The concentration should demonstrate theoretical learning (the ability to attach meaning and interpretations to experience) and practical learning (the ability to test theoretical learning through applying it in practice).

All concentrations must have a minimum of 45 total credits, at least 15 of which must be upper division (300, 400, 500 level) credits of appropriate formal coursework either at UMass Amherst or elsewhere.

In addition, students must complete all other UMass Amherst graduation requirements (120 credits, 45 residence credits, General Education requirements).

The undergraduate program has generated a high degree of student satisfaction. In the most recent graduating senior survey, it surpassed the campus average for every question regarding satisfaction with the major, scored more than a full standard deviation above the mean for all departments on seven of the ten questions, and had the highest score on campus for student satisfaction with their overall UMass experience. This is especially significant given the large enrollment in the program.

At present, there is no graduate degree, but we have begun discussion of a possible Master's degree in Interdisciplinary Studies, which would involve combining and integrating online graduate certificate programs, beginning with a core course in interdisciplinarity and ending with a capstone course that identifies and reflects on connections between the distinct areas of specialized study.

Administrative Structure

Given the unique mission and constituency of the program, it relies upon a large cohort of professional and administrative staff, including: three academic advisors; a director of marketing, communications, and recruitment; a pre-admissions advisor; an admissions coordinator; a student services coordinator; an administrative and customer-support coordinator; and a student administrative support representative.

Under the proposed reorganization into a department, the Chair will be responsible for overseeing curriculum and faculty personnel matters, including hiring, course assignments, and reviews. The Chair will report to the Associate Provost, who will oversee the professional and administrative staff and the operations of the department as a whole.

Budget

For more than a decade, the proposed department has been self-sustaining and has not relied on state funding. The Senior Vice Provost for Lifelong Learning has provided office space and some other resources, but faculty and staff salaries and other expenses are paid from the revenue from course credits and other student fees.

While fluctuations in enrollments have affected revenue from year to year and have led to budget challenges, for the past five fiscal years the program has ended with a positive cumulative balance. To preserve and expand the balance, and to meet campus targets for budget reductions in FY21, the program left one less essential staff position vacant and replaced another with a temporary employee, reduced office and travel expenses, and increased instructional efficiency through careful management of enrollment. New sections of required courses were not opened until existing sections were filled, resulting in classes at or near maximum capacity. Based on the first half of FY21, we project a year-end surplus of over \$200,000, which would expand the balance to over \$1 million.

Conclusion

In many ways, the UWW Degree Completion Program already functions like a department: it maintains full-time faculty, offers an undergraduate degree, and has both a Personnel and a Curriculum Committee. Since it is a free-standing unit, its formal change into a department will not affect any other unit on campus. There are also no financial implications since the Department would continue to fund its salaries and operations with the revenue it generates from student enrollment.