

Reviewers' Report on the Interdisciplinary Studies Undergraduate Programs in the Faculty of Media, Art, and Performance at University of Regina.

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SUMMARY

The interdisciplinary undergraduate programs, consisting of concentrations/minors of Pop Culture and Creative Technologies within the Faculty of Media, Art, and Performance (MAP) at the University of Regina has experienced rapid organic/unstructured growth, along with growing student interest in its offerings. The Creative Technologies concentration in particular is uniquely positioned in MAP, insofar as it allows for connections and collaborations with other Faculties, departments, universities, and with industry in Saskatchewan and beyond. Faculty members are actively engaged and noticeably passionate about their diverse research interests. Its current structure, however, is not sustainable. The programs are lacking in clear vision, focus, and outcomes, while stakeholders are significantly struggling under a lack of clear governance and lack of support. We outline here our report on the programs along with six actionable areas where there is evidence of need for improvement:

- **WORKPLACE CULTURE:** Improve workplace culture and address communication issues in the MAP Faculty
- **VISION:** Actively involve all stakeholders in developing a new vision for the IDP undergraduate interdisciplinary programs.
- **GOVERNANCE:** Address Structural Issues that have disenfranchised stakeholders
- **SUPPORT:** Undertake critical work in restructuring technical resources and support staff, removing redundancies and creating efficiencies by removing duplication, so as to better support all units.
- **CURRICULUM:** Tighten and focus the Interdisciplinary Courses
- **INTERDISCIPLINARITY:** Develop a framework for interdisciplinarity at the unit level, the Faculty level, and the University level.

INTRODUCTION

This document summarizes the External Review of the Interdisciplinary Undergraduate Programs in the Faculty of Media, Art, and Performance (MAP), University of Regina. The review team consisted of Joanna Berzowska, Associate Professor of Design and Computation Arts at Concordia University, Dr. KC Collins, Associate Professor of Communication Arts at the University of Waterloo, and Douglas Cripps, Associate Dean (Undergraduate) at the Faculty of Kinesiology and Health Studies at the University of Regina.

The Interdisciplinary Undergraduate Programs (IDP) report to the Dean's office, most recently to the Associate Dean Interdisciplinary Programs and Special Projects, a position that has been vacant since Spring 2020, and currently to the Associate Dean Undergraduate, and are supported by an ad-hoc group of faculty, both departmentalized and non departmentalized, within the Faculty of Media, Art, and Performance (MAP). The Unit includes a broad range of popular interdisciplinary course offerings and contain the following areas of study: BA concentrations (and Minors) in Creative Technologies (CTCH) and Pop Culture, as well as a range of other Minors including Arts Administration, Photography, Community and Social Engagement, and Canadian Identities.

1. DETAILS OF THE SITE VISIT

The team carried out a virtual site visit that consisted of online videos to view facilities (including the general University of Regina campus and the Faculty of MAP), and Zoom meetings, held on April 5th, 6th, and 12th 2021, with faculty, staff and students. Specifically, the team met with:

- Professor Rae Staseson, Dean, Faculty of MAP
- Dr. Christine Ramsey, Associate Dean (Graduate Studies and Research) in MAP; Coordinator of Interdisciplinary Graduate Programs; and MAP Lead, Interdisciplinary Undergraduate Program Review
- Prof. Sean Whalley, Chair of IDP Undergraduate Committee and Associate Dean (Undergraduate) in MAP
- Dr. Fanhua Zeng, Associate Dean (Grad Studies & Research) in the Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science
- Haroon Chaudhry, Acting Associate Vice President (International) in UR International
- John Smith, Associate Vice-President, Kevin Bolen (Director), Shauna Koester (Enrollment Services) Student Affairs
- Dr. David Gregory, Interim Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
- Dr. Kathleen McNutt, Vice-President (Research)
- Dr. Nilgün Önder, Associate Vice-President (Academic)
- Jan Bell, MAP Faculty Administrator
- Rita Racette, Administrative Assistant for the Theatre Department and the IDP undergraduate programs
- Janelle Schwartz and Jennifer Lockwood, MAP Student Program Office
- Gillian van der Ven, Liaison Librarian
- Dr. Kathryn Bracht, IDS UG Committee member (Theatre faculty)
- David Dick, IDS UG Committee member (Music faculty)
- Dr. Rebecca Caines, IDS UG Committee member (Creative Technologies faculty)
- Dr. Risa Horowitz, IDS UG Committee member (Visual Arts faculty)
- Dr. Sheila Petty, IDS UG Committee member (Film faculty)
- Dr. Charity Marsh (Creative Technologies faculty)
- Dr. Randal Rogers (Creative Technologies faculty)
- Dr. Shannon Holmes (Theatre faculty)

- Dr. Craig Gelowitz (Engineering and Applied Science faculty)
- Prof. Wes Pearce (former Associate Dean Interdisciplinary Programs & Special Projects; former Associate Dean Undergraduate Programs; and Theatre faculty)
- Prof. Anthony Deiter and Prof. Ben Halsall (sessional faculty, Creative Technologies)
- Dami Egbeyemi, Brett Wyatt (alumni students)
- Nicole Durell, Emma Chuckry and Joseph Mcaigi (students-Creative Technologies)

In addition to these meetings, we also consulted a variety of documents and websites that were provided in advance of, and after the course of the visit, including the IDS self-study document (2021), the Grad Program Review document (2020), the University of Regina Budget Book Operating Funds (2021), the CTECH Student Handbook (2021), and various department and university websites.

- Program website: <https://www.uregina.ca/mediaartperformance/creative-technologies.html>
- Self-review report:
https://www.uregina.ca/president/assets/docs/PVPA%20docs/Council%20Committee%20on%20Academic%20Mission/academic%20unit%20reviews/2020-21/ID-Undergraduate/Revised_IDP_Undergrad_Program_Self_Study.pdf
- Welcome/Library/Student Services: https://mediaspace.uregina.ca/media/Welcome/0_5ix3m20e
- Undergraduate Interdisciplinary Programs in the Faculty of MAP:
https://mediaspace.uregina.ca/media/Undergraduate+Interdisciplinary+Programs+in+the+Faculty+of+MAP+-+Unit+Review/0_d9mr6snf
- Creative Technologies Handbook: <https://www.uregina.ca/mediaartperformance/assets/docs/pdf/CTech-Handbook.pdf>
- Review of MAP IDS Graduate Programs, University of Regina
https://www.uregina.ca/president/assets/docs/PVPA%20docs/Council%20Committee%20on%20Academic%20Mission/academic%20unit%20reviews/2019-20/ID-Graduate/MAP_IDS_Grad_Programs_External_Reviewers_Report.pdf
- 2020-21 University budget (MAP Faculty starts at page 36):
<https://www.uregina.ca/orp/assets/budget/book/2020-21-budget-book.pdf>
- Tableau visualization of all degrees from MAP Faculty (up to 2014)
<https://public.tableau.com/profile/orp7503#!vizhome/DDEPT2/DashAR>

2. EVALUATION CRITERIA

2.1 The role the unit plays in meeting the University's vision, mission, goals and priorities

There is a clear desire to align aspects of the IDP undergraduate programs with the university's mission, vision and values of "Equity, Diversity and Inclusion" as well as "Indigenous Ways of knowing and Being" and "Communities and Social Responsibility": there are valuable connections with the wider community, including the indigenous community in Saskatchewan and beyond, notably in the Pop Culture minor in particular. The faculty are all actively engaged in commendable outreach projects.

The programs provide a unique and accessible means into cultural theory and technology for a wide audience, with a large number of service teaching and courses offered through the Centre for Continuing Education. The interdisciplinary nature of the program means that the breadth of topics attracts students from across and outside the university campus. The applied nature of the Creative Technologies (CTCH) program offers unique opportunities for students to further those connections through internships, which could be further explored.

2.2 The structure and quality of the programs and instruction. The degree to which academic programs meet students' learning needs and goals. The contribution of each program to related disciplines and fields of study.

Currently, the two concentrations/minors within Interdisciplinary Studies (pop culture and CTCH) are not majors or subsidiaries to larger programs at the University of Regina, but, rather, consist of a collection of courses that are taken by those studying for other degrees within MAP, or as elective courses taken by students from other faculties. Some of the CTCH courses are taken as required courses in the Creative Technologies Education and General Music Education program in the Faculty of Education. It is clear that some of the courses are sometimes used as a recruitment and promotional tool for the MAP faculty as a whole. Both of the programs' courses enjoy large enrolments and full classes.

Nevertheless, while pop culture classes appear to be a draw, the pop culture program in itself appears to lack demand. It is unclear why the program exists as a separate minor given the lack of numbers involved in students declaring it as a concentration or minor. The courses lack coherence and continuity, with many courses developed and taught in isolation of a greater vision of program goals or the current state of the art in cultural studies. Courses are very instructor-dependent, and while taking advantage of some unique skills and experiences that some sessionals have brought to their courses and to the programs, the direction of the courses seem to be instructor-driven rather than outcome-driven or program-driven, reinforcing the lack of coherence and the lack of strategic link to programmatic or unit goals.

Students spoke of feeling "isolated", "marginalized" and lacking a sense of community. Students felt that the pop culture and CTCH programs lacked structure, lacked a scaffolding of skills, and lacked rigour and depth, instead describing that the programs were attempting to "serve everyone" and were missing some essential instructional components (notably safety issues and technical support). Further, students felt some courses ran more like an independent study than a formal instructor-led course.

With a lack of agreed upon vision for the programs and a lack of oversight, the programs have developed with an ad hoc approach, where courses appear to be trialled based on perceived popularity rather than according to a clear vision of what learning outcomes students should achieve having enrolled in either individual courses or the concentration. Likewise, the disconnect that students felt could be largely due to the lack of structure and continuity and the visibility of the programs on campus is hindered by this lack of coherence.

The courses as they stand do not offer a clear, well-defined progression in developing technical skills or allow students to develop and demonstrate a proficiency in any one area. Students spoke about feeling ill-prepared for the job market, entrepreneurship, and/or for graduate school.

The CTCH program stands out as a program which has much support amongst all stakeholders and is unique in Saskatchewan. We believe that there is considerable opportunity for growth in this area, in terms of the interdisciplinary connections between faculties on campus, between departments in MAP, and between the university and the wider community.

2.3 The characteristics of staffing complements and the scope and significance of research being pursued.

The faculty who teach in the Pop Culture and CTCH programs are drawn from a variety of areas inside and outside of MAP. Their research profiles and outputs are strong, given their administrative and teaching loads, and we note their ability to bring in grant funding and to attract outside public interest to their work. The faculty are keen to bring their research interests and expertise to the classroom, and are passionate about their areas of work. The

faculty have been working well with others in engineering and computer science, and are seen as valuable contributors to teaching and research beyond MAP, which is very advantageous to students and the university.

The primary drivers behind the CTCH program appear to be a cohort of three faculty (plus one vacant position due to a resignation within the last year - a search is underway) who are not housed in any one department (non-departmentalized faculty, or NDFs). These NDFs (and thus the programs they are shepherding), are struggling with what they articulated as a lack of formal leadership, lack of clear governance structures, lack of collegiality, and lack of clear policies and procedures, although they are currently overseen by the Dean's office.

There are a very large number of sessionals teaching in the programs. While this allows for greater flexibility on the part of administration, it is clear that the reliance on sessionals has also contributed to a lack of clear coherence in the programs themselves. There is very little interaction between sessionals and the tenured/tenure track faculty, and no dedicated person inside the program to oversee sessionals, to explain the mandate of the programs, to communicate program goals and learning outcomes, and so on. In particular, there does not seem to be a standing curriculum committee and no structure to facilitate any conversations between sessionals and tenured faculty members to ensure appropriate course development and laddering of skills.

The programs currently share a technician, Chris Zastrow. The amount of time officially dedicated to the IDS programs by Mr. Zastrow was unclear, seeing as we heard conflicting accounts, but it was evident that faculty and students alike felt that there should be additional technical support for the programs. While budgetary issues may make such support difficult, there are opportunities that could minimize costs using student helpers. Additionally, the librarian spoke of opportunities to maintain equipment and offer rudimentary tutorials. The nature of the CTCH program in particular is very equipment driven, and this necessitates dedicated support to purchase and maintain equipment as well as provide some form of loan system to students.

2.4 The financial resources of the unit

There has been some commitment in recent years by the Dean's office to developing classrooms suitable for the MAP interdisciplinary programs. However, the interdisciplinary programs as they stand now appear to be under-resourced. Running a program in digital media by its nature requires a sustained commitment to equipment purchase, maintenance and upkeep. There appears to be some confusion and difficulties at the moment with regards to budgetary decision-making at the program level.

3. TOPICS FOR ADVICE: Challenges and Opportunities

There are significant opportunities for growth, as well as creating structural efficiencies in the Interdisciplinary Studies undergraduate programs. We identified several related areas of challenge that should be addressed in order to move forward.

3.1 **WORKPLACE CULTURE:** Improve workplace culture and address communication issues in the MAP Faculty

It became readily apparent through our discussions with all stakeholders that there are considerable frictions endemic in the MAP workplace, resulting in communication issues, frustration, a perceived lack of trust and respect, interpersonal conflicts, as well as feelings of vulnerability and disempowerment. This affects the productivity and the well-being of the people involved and has resulted in an apparent communication impasse between faculty members and administrators in MAP. This tension was also picked up by students, who spoke of feeling isolated and segregated from the other programs within MAP.

Some of these issues stem from the historical difficulties in creating a successful institutional governance structure involving the NDFs (the primary drivers behind the CTCH program) in a faculty that remains departmentalized. This has created particular challenges for the NDFs when it comes to decision-making and implementing change.

Resolving structural issues is one important step towards helping to heal these rifts. At the same time, implementing a successful structure will require all stakeholders to trust and respect one another so as to better work together. The main challenge will be to create a framework where stakeholders can work efficiently and collaboratively to develop a future vision and structure for the IDP undergraduate programs. As such, it will be beneficial to bring in an external mediator who has expertise in academic workplace culture, interpersonal communication, and change management. Important steps in this direction include:

- Leadership should clearly articulate the importance of creating a safe work environment and take responsibility for a workplace culture consistent with university respectful workplace policies.
- Host a retreat with an impartial (external) mentor/facilitator in order to address work environment and communications issues.
- Engage with the Office of Respectful University Services to leverage internal supports and resources in addition to external resources.
- Develop an integrated and systematic approach to creating a culture that focuses on well-being and performance, including social awareness and social management.
- Develop training strategies to promote self-awareness and self-management, as well as best organizational practices. This could include a series of conversations, workshops, or practice based activities that can shift the workplace culture.
- Create clear and transparent guidelines and working practices so as to develop a mutual understanding of why processes and procedures are in place.

3.2 **VISION:** Actively involve all stakeholders in developing a new vision for the IDP undergraduate interdisciplinary programs.

With a lack of agreed upon vision for the programs and a lack of oversight, the programs have developed organically. This can no longer be sustained and serious work must be done by all stakeholders to collectively develop a vision for the area, tied to specific outcomes and recruitment strategies. Important steps in this direction include:

- Engage with stakeholders (faculty members, staff, students, and alumni) on developing a future vision for the IDP undergraduate programs through a series of workshops and practice-driven visioning exercises.
- Develop a new vision for interdisciplinarity across departments in MAP.
- Implement various workplace training activities that focus on change management, best practices, and effective processes so as to help with the transition.

3.3 **GOVERNANCE:** Address Structural Issues that have disenfranchised stakeholders

There is currently no clear governance structure nor are there effective or actionable decision-making pathways in place. For instance, the Chair of the CTCH Sub-Committee has no decision-making power. The CTCH Sub-Committee is supposed to report to the IDP UG Committee, but the IDP UG Committee has not met in the past year and previous to that met infrequently and at the call of the chair. As such all the work done by the CTCH Sub-Committee is not actionable. We see a clear need for a workable governance structure that ensures faculty are engaged in decision-making with regards to the programs.

Given the difficult history of the area, it is crucial that this structure be developed in consultation with all stakeholders, through activities such as Idea Labs, workshops, and collegial conversations. Important steps in this direction include:

- Hold Idea Labs in order to flesh out various scenarios for housing CTCH and collectively build consensus to implement the one that makes most sense. Consult with all stakeholders to ensure equitable and mutually agreeable solutions.
- Collectively explore the options for re-envisaging the MAP Faculty in new ways, for instance where a department may house the interdisciplinary programs and current NDFs but where each unit within the department maintains its own autonomy.
- Look at examples from other institutions. For instance, at uWaterloo the Digital Arts Communication group (4 faculty) joined the Drama and Speech Communication department. Each of the 3 units in the department initially had a director that reported to the department chair. They had separate unit meetings and curricular decisions that were brought back to the department but were kept initially as autonomous units. Through strategic hiring, they were able to bring together some curriculum and research projects and are now collectively working on a graduate program that brings together all of the strengths and have unified into one department which was renamed Communication Arts. While they still maintain separate teaching and research areas/units, they have made new hires that teach across different areas.
- Create clear governance structures that ensure faculty are engaged in decision-making with regards to the programs.
- In order to make the process smoother, implement various workplace training activities that focus on change management, best practices, and effective processes.

3.4 **SUPPORT:** Undertake critical work in restructuring technical resources and support staff, removing redundancies and creating efficiencies by removing duplication, so as to better support all units.

One area of unanimous agreement among stakeholders was the clear need for additional technical support for the programs. While budgetary issues are a reality, work can be done in restructuring and sharing resources in a more efficient and collegial way. Important steps in this direction include:

- Centralize technical areas, and administrative support, physically where possible (so they move from being departmental to being faculty-level): thus, when the wood shop is empty the technician can provide support to another area, etc. Share technical support and common library of tools across faculty. Explore possibility of a centralized administrative structure to ensure effective and efficient support.
- Explore the possibilities of sharing resources across other faculties, given that MAP supports their students (e.g. Computer Science, Engineering)
- Create a better working relationship with the Library and find ways to employ the library resources
- Explore opportunities that could minimize costs using student work-study programs or student volunteers to help provide additional technical support.
 - Reference 1: “Core Technical Centres” (CTC) across all Faculty
<https://www.concordia.ca/finearts/facilities/studio-support/core-technical-centres.html>
 - Reference 2: The Shop Assistant Program (SAPlings) initiative for student volunteers in exchange for tool training and 24/7 access to the shop
<https://www.concordia.ca/finearts/facilities/studio-support/core-technical-centres/shop-assistant-program.html>
 - Reference 3: PIXLS student volunteers who guide you through the [CTC Moodle page](#)
 - Reference 4: “Core Technical Centres” (CTC) across all Faculty
<https://www.concordia.ca/finearts/facilities/studio-support/core-technical-centres.html>

3.5 CURRICULUM: Tighten and focus the Interdisciplinary Courses

To address the observation that courses currently lack coherence and continuity, with many courses developed and taught in isolation, we see the need to clearly articulate program goals and learning outcomes. Courses currently seem to be very instructor-dependent, and while taking advantage of some unique skills and experiences that some sessionals have brought to their courses and to the programs, the direction of the courses seem to be instructor-driven rather than outcome-driven or program-driven, reinforcing the lack of coherence and the lack of strategic link to programmatic or unit goals. Important steps in this direction include:

- Through intensive workshopping, the programs need to be clearly defined, focussed on outcomes and skills, and then designed in order that courses lead a student through a scaffolding approach to skills development.
- A curriculum committee, which includes sessional representation, needs to be established in order to effectively implement curriculum changes.
- Explore the development of new “double major” programs, or develop CTCH into a major and support it with the resources it needs to do that.
- Streamline the course offerings in a way that reinforces the program goals and focus on the core skills and values of the program.
- Plan ahead for course offerings in 2-5 year intervals so faculty know what they are teaching and students know what is being offered.

3.6 INTERDISCIPLINARITY: Develop a framework for interdisciplinarity at the unit level, the Faculty level, and the University level.

A core divisive issue in the MAP Faculty centered around the problematic of defining “interdisciplinarity”, to create consensus about that definition, and to help reduce insularity and silo mentality. Rather than striving to develop a singular definition of interdisciplinarity, MAP should focus on charting out the multiple ways that interdisciplinarity can be defined and enacted inside the Faculty and across the University. Interdisciplinarity is context specific and can be used to refer to a range of theoretical and practical approaches, all of which are valid. Important steps in this direction include:

- Hold Idea Labs to map out a variety of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches.
- For example, define the interdisciplinary pedagogies in Creative Technologies: within the program, across departments in MAP, and across Faculties, while also engaging theories, methods and collaborative practices from and with disciplines in the social sciences, hard sciences, and engineering.
- At the theoretical level, this could include issues of critical post-humanism, thing theory, affect theory, embodiment and new media theory. Methods/collaboration from social science and engineering include iterative design (from engineering and HCI), ethnography (including sensory ethnography) and other qualitative, first person methods.
- At the structural level, develop a culture of cross-listing courses through strategic discussions with other faculty Deans/ AVP-UG in a way that can facilitate sharing of resources
- Increase the full-time faculty complement (and reduce the reliance on sessionals) with faculty that can bridge the program with other areas on campus and/or within MAP.
- Reinforce interdisciplinarity by creating faculty that are cross-appointed (e.g., Visual Arts and Music). They can have a primary affiliation, but also secondary to help cross departmental silos.