

Self-Study

Interdisciplinary Studies: Social Science

Prepared by Ann Branaman, Director of Interdisciplinary Studies in the College of Arts and Letters

Mission and purpose of the program

This interdisciplinary degree program contributes to the goal of expanded access to the BA degree, Goal 1 in the 2006-2013 Strategic Plan. The requirements for the program may be fully met on either the Boca Raton campus or the Davie campus. The requirements for the program may also be met fully on the Jupiter campus with significant constraints, but could more easily be met with a maximum of 15 credits taken at other campuses or through distance learning. The degree is an interdisciplinary degree that draws on the college's programs in Anthropology, Communication Studies, History, Political Science, Sociology, Women, Gender, and Sexuality studies in addition to three out-of-college social science programs: Economics, Geography, Psychology.

Date and description of last external (i.e., accreditation) review, if applicable, or last review of this program

When social science programs were reviewed seven years ago, the interdisciplinary social science BA was not included among the programs reviewed. To the best of our knowledge, the degree program has never been reviewed.

Instruction: Review of Part I of Departmental Dashboard Indicators

Part I DDI tables begin with part B. B1, B2, B3, C1, and C2 are not applicable to this program since the program has no faculty and no courses of its own.

We do have DDI tables for B4a (majors enrolled by level), B4b (majors enrolled by gender and ethnicity), and C3 (degrees awarded).

Data are available for the academic years 2002-2003 through 2011-2012.

DDI Table B4a

B 4 Majors Enrolled By Level (Annual Headcount)

Social Science (Program CIP: 450101)

	Social Science				
	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	% Change
Bachelors	142	130	136	116	-18%

	Social Science			College Total	University Total
	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2007-2008	2007-2008
Bachelors	163	173	168	4,444	24,670

	Social Science			College Total	University Total
	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2004-2005	2004-2005
Bachelors	147	143	144	4,369	23,858

Summary and analysis: As the data in DDI Table 4a shows, the number of majors climbed to a high of 173 in 2006-2007 and has declined in recent years. I do not have information that will allow me to interpret the 20-25 person increase in enrollment that occurred in 2005-2006 and persisted through 2007-2008.

There are two explanations, however, for the decline in majors since the peak number of majors in the years 2007-2008 (89.3) and 2008-2009 (88.5). One explanation is a policy change initiated by the Dean of the College of Arts and Letters in 2009: the discontinuation of a past practice of allowing up to 15 credits of coursework in Education to count towards the Social Science BA. Because this degree program had been a common destination for former Social Science Education students who switched majors due to inability to manage the student teaching requirement, this policy undoubtedly contributed to a loss of majors. Consequent to a recommendation that emerged from the recent program review of the college's other interdisciplinary studies program, this policy was recently reversed. I would be surprised not to see an increase in the number of majors in the next two or three academic years as a consequence of this reversal of policy.

A second part of the explanation, however, is that a portion of the apparent decline in majors since 2008-2009 is only apparent and likely a product of a tendency of later major declaration for this program. Beginning in 2008-2009, our college undergraduate programs committee initiated a policy requiring students to submit a plan of study prior to declaring an Interdisciplinary Studies major. In fact, students

who declare this major upon admission to the university or through freshman advising will be registered as majors prior to their completion of the plan of study. But a larger portion of our majors have changed to this major from another; these students must complete a plan of study before their major change will be processed. This may have produced a delay in the major declaration of some students and eliminated the declaration of other students who were unsure in their commitment to the major.

DDI Table 3C shows that the number of degrees awarded in Interdisciplinary Studies: Social Science has not declined to the same extent as the major headcount. In general, there has been an increase over the past decade in the number of degrees awarded as a proportion of the total number of majors. The biggest increase in proportion, however, occurs in 2005-2006 concurrently with the jump in the number of majors. Nonetheless, the degree/major proportion of the academic years 2008-2009, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012 are modestly higher than the three years of highest major count: 2005-2006, 2006-2007, and 2007-2008. This suggests that some small portion of the decline in majors may be a consequence of a pattern of delayed major declaration.

3C Degrees awarded		4a Number of majors	Degrees/Majors %
2002-2003	41	147	27.9%
2003-2004	53.5	143	37.4%
2004-2005	47.5	144	33%
2005-2006	83.5	163	51.2%
2006-2007	77	173	44%
2007-2008	89.3	168	53.2%
2008-2009	88.5	142	62.3%
2009-2010	60.5	130	46.5%
2010-2011	74	136	54.4%
2011-2012	66	116	56.9%

DDI Table 3C Degrees awarded

C 3 Degrees Awarded						
Social Science (Program CIP: 450101)						
		Undergraduate: Social Science				
		2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	% Change
Bachelors	Degrees awarded with					
	Single major	58	44	40	41	-29%
	Double or triple major	30.5	16.5	34	25	-18%
	All	88.5	60.5	74	66	-25%

		Social Science			College Total	University Total
		2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2007-2008	2007-2008
Bachelors	Degrees awarded with a:					
	Single major	66.0	63.0	62.0	920.0	4,125.0
	Double or triple major	17.5	14.0	27.3	113.5	356.0
	All	83.5	77.0	89.3	1,033.5	4,481.0

The number of degrees awarded has been fairly consistent since 2005-2006, ranging from a low of 60.5 in 2009-2010 to a high of 89.3 in 2007-2008. The average number of degrees awarded over the past seven academic years is 77.

DDI Table 4b Number of majors by gender and ethnicity

B 4 Majors Enrolled (Annual Headcount) By Gender and Ethnicity							
Social Science (Program CIP: 450101)							
		Social Science					
		2008-	2009-	2010-	2011-	%	
Undergraduate	American Indian/Alaskan Native	Fema			1	0	-
		Male	1				-100%
		Total	1		1	0	-100%
	Asian or Pacific Islander	Fema	3	4	4	1	-67%
		Male	1		0	0	-100%
		Total	4	4	4	1	-75%
	Black (Not of Hispanic Origin)	Fema	11	9	14	13	18%
		Male	11	11	11	10	-9%
		Total	22	20	25	23	5%
	Hispanic	Fema	14	9	9	9	-36%
		Male	8	11	10	8	0%
		Total	22	20	19	17	-23%
	White (Not of Hispanic Origin)	Fema	56	46	42	43	-23%
		Male	37	39	43	32	-14%
		Total	93	85	85	75	-19%
	Non-Resident Alien	Fema					-
		Male			1	0	-
Total				1	0	-	
Not Reported	Fema		1	1	0	-	
	Male			0	0	-	
	Total		1	1	0	-	
Total	Fema	84	69	71	66	-21%	
	Male	58	61	65	50	-14%	
	Total	142	130	136	116	-18%	

Summary and analysis: The gender and ethnic composition of Social Science BA majors is roughly comparable to that of the university as a whole.

In 2011-2012, 20% of our majors were Black (compared to 18% for the university as a whole).

In 2011-2012, 14.7% of our majors were Hispanic (compared to 21.1% for the university as a whole).

In 2011-2012, 64.7% of our majors were non-Hispanic White (compared to 51.1% for the university as a whole).

In 2011-2012, 56% of our majors were female and 44% male (compared to 58% female and 42% male for the university as a whole).

These numbers have been fairly consistent over the past decade.

Learning goals and assessment

Due to the inherent variability in programs of study of students pursuing an interdisciplinary degree, the goals for student learning in this major are very general and are linked to the student's chosen area of concentration. They are as follows:

Content knowledge: Students will demonstrate mastery of content knowledge within the area of concentration.

Communication skills: Students will demonstrate mastery of at least one communication skill within the area of concentration.

Critical thinking: Students will demonstrate mastery of critical thinking skills within the area of concentration.

See Appendix A for the program's current Academic Learning Compact.

The learning goals acquire greater specificity, however, depending on the specific learning goals of the college's social science disciplines. All students must concentrate in one of the college's social science disciplines or certificate programs: Anthropology, Communication Studies, History, Political Science, Sociology, or Women, Gender and Sexualities studies.

Our latest assessment report (an assessment of student achievement during the 2011-2012 academic year) yielded unsatisfactory results, both with respect to student accomplishment as well as with the assessment plan itself. See Appendix B for the 2011-2012 assessment report and 2012-2013 assessment plan.

Because the assessment was based on required concentration area courses taken by majors in their final semester, the sample size turned out to be too small. Only 12 students were taking one of the required concentration area courses, yielding only 14 sets of coursework (2 students were taking 2 required courses). Furthermore, most of the required concentration area courses were methodology courses which we concluded were inadequate to adequately assess the range of learning goals.

Given these limitations, however, in our assessment plan, however, we were also concerned with the relatively high proportion of the 12 students performed at a below average level. 4 students performed at a below-average level, 6 at an acceptable level, and only 2 at a superior level.

Use of results for assessment improvement: We were unsatisfied with the data we obtained to assess the program in 2011-2012. Not only did it yield a sample size smaller than we had wished for, but the required core courses in the AL social science disciplines upon which our assessment was based offer a very limited view of a students' overall performance in the major.

Due to our dissatisfaction with the current plan, we have changed our assessment plan for 2012-2013. The

2011-2012 assessment was developed based on program requirements that required majors to complete, as part of their concentration area requirements, the particular course(s) used by disciplines for program assessment. Implemented only to facilitate program assessment, we concluded that this was an artificial requirement that did not serve our majors particularly well. Beginning in the summer of 2012, we modified our concentration area requirements such that they are now identical to the requirements of a disciplinary minor or certificate program.

For the 2012-2013 academic year, we plan to assess the performance of our majors in all courses in their concentration area and, when possible, to assess the progression of student performance over the course of their program of study.

Pre-requisites, limited access, admission

There are no lower level pre-requisite courses for students in this major.

This is not a limited access program.

Any student enrolled at FAU is eligible to enter the major. The only requirement for admission to the major is the completion of a plan of study. (Students may enter the major prior to meeting this requirement, however, if they declare the major at the time of admission or through freshman advising. In these cases, they are advised to complete a plan of study no later than the beginning of their junior year.

Enrollment information (headcount and SCH production); average class size and faculty/student ratio

Since all of our courses in the major are courses offered by departments, we have no independent headcount, SCH production data, average class size, and faculty/student ratio data.

Recruitment: We do not actively recruit for this major. The consensus of the members of the Arts & Letters Undergraduate Program Committee, who worked on revision to this program for a few years prior to changes made in Fall 2011, is that most students would be better served majoring in particular academic disciplines. Accordingly, our goal has been more to decrease than to increase interdisciplinary studies majors. Students are made aware of this major, however, primarily by advisors across the college and university who perceive that particular students might be well served by selecting interdisciplinary studies as a major (often after discontinuing another major). The major is also introduced at orientation and recruitment events for prospective and incoming FAU students.

Curriculum

We have made substantial revisions to the requirements of the major over the past several academic years in an effort to increase rigor and coherence. The major change has been to add the requirement of a concentration area; concentration area requirements are, in most cases, identical to the requirements for a disciplinary minor. We believe that the addition of the requirement of the disciplinary concentration area will add coherence and rigor to the students' program of study (while also allowing students to earn a minor concurrently with completing the major requirements). Having made the change recently, we are not yet able to say whether the change has been effective in producing the desired changes of increased coherence and rigor. Based on knowledge acquired from advising interdisciplinary majors over the past academic year in which the change has been in effect, the concentration requirement does seem to have resulted in students gaining more competence in their area of concentration and becoming more connected to the discipline in which they are completing concentration area requirements.

Structure of curriculum: The major requires no particular courses, no sequencing, and no capstone or senior seminar courses. Students are required to complete 39 credits in the major. Up to 9 credits may be lower division courses (excluding courses already counted towards general education requirements); the other 30 credits must be upper division courses. Concentration area requirements range from a minimum of 15 credits to a maximum of 18 credits. The remaining credits in the major may be composed of any combination of courses in social science disciplines (limited to a maximum of 18 credits per discipline). Due to administrative challenges of determining which lower division courses have or have not fulfilled general education requirements, we are considering increasing the upper division credit requirement to 33 while allowing general education lower division courses to count for the remaining 6 credits. See Appendix C for curriculum worksheets.

Time required for completion: Many students enter the major after discontinuing a major in another related degree program. Accordingly, it is not uncommon that a student may complete the major in a single semester or two from the time they declare the major. A student with no prior credits in the major, however, would require 3 semesters to complete the major requirements – two full-time semesters (15 credits each) and one part-time (9 credits). Because of the flexibility of the program, it is unlikely that the student would require any additional time on account of course sequencing or course availability.

Pedagogy: Because this major depends on courses offered by disciplinary departments, any pedagogical innovations in the program are dependent upon pedagogical initiatives in departments and in the college. As evidenced by faculty participation in faculty learning communities (organized by the Center for Teaching and Learning), there are a growing number of faculty in the college implementing pedagogical innovations in their own classes. The quality of the program might be improved if pedagogical innovation were to become even more widespread in the college's social science disciplines.

Online opportunities: Beginning in 2011, the university began a process of training faculty for online teaching. Several of the college faculty has undergone this training, and consequently there has been a significant increase in online courses in the major. During the 2012-2013, 14 courses were offered in the college's social science degree programs. With more and more faculty gaining training each semester, we expect the online offerings in the major to increase from semester to semester. The increase in online offerings is potentially highly beneficial for many students who live far from the main Boca Raton campus who choose this program because of the difficulty in completing a major with limited course offerings on partner campuses. With expectations of further reductions in offerings on less utilized campuses, the addition of online course offerings in the major will become ever more important. We do not currently have a sufficient number and variety of online courses taught in Social Sciences to make it possible to complete the degree in its entirety online, although we believe that this could soon be possible with continued growth in online course offerings (and intentional efforts by departments to offer a number of online courses sufficient for earning a disciplinary minor). Our college's social science disciplines have, however, created a sufficient number of online courses that students who attend classes primarily on the Jupiter campus could complete this degree with little to no requirement of traveling to the Boca Raton campus.

Advising procedures: The advising procedures for this major have undergone a couple of significant changes over the last couple of academic years. Prior to 2011, students in this major (and the college's other interdisciplinary degree program) had been advised in the College of Arts and Letters student services office by professional advisors. Due to program changes implemented in 2011, however, advising for both programs was shifted from the college office to the Interdisciplinary Studies director who met with each student to devise and approve particular plans of study for each student. The director communicated with chairs of the college's disciplinary departments for information on their major assessment practices, courses used for assessment, and minor requirements in an effort to maintain consistent concentration area requirements (and to request substitutions upon student request). The 3

semesters of direct engagement of the director with the Interdisciplinary students provided the director with a better understanding of the interests, needs, and challenges of students in these programs and ultimately led to some minor modifications to the programs to better meet student needs and to facilitate timely graduation. Over this time period, however, it became clear that the time commitment required of the director was far in excess of the number of assigned hours and that plans of study were becoming increasingly standardized after a few semesters of the new concentration area requirements. The director produced templates for the major with every possible concentration area and then, in the middle of the Fall 2012 semester, advising for this program was returned to the College of Arts and Letters student services office. All plans of study, however, continue to be reviewed and approved by the director.

Retention/graduation rates

Retention: In general, the retention/graduation rates are higher for the ISSS major than the overall rate of students in the college. See attached PDF file for detailed data.

- The graduation rate for students who entered FAU as first time college students in 2003 whose last major was ISSS was 25% after 4 years. For the college, the corresponding rate was 15.3%; for the university, it was 14%.
- The percentage of students who entered FAU as first time students in 2003 who had either graduated or persisted at FAU after 4 years was 95% for ISSS majors. For the college, the corresponding rate was 56.2%; for the university, it was 51.1%.
- The graduation rate for students who entered FAU in 2006 with AA degrees from Florida state colleges was 73.3% after 3 years for ISSS majors. The comparable number for the college as a whole was 58%; for the university, it was 51%.
- The percentage of students who entered FAU in 2006 with AA degrees from Florida state colleges who had either graduated or persisted at FAU after 3 years was 86.6% for ISSS majors. For the college, the corresponding rate was 79.8%; for the university, it was 78.7%.

The likely explanation of the higher rate of graduation and retention for ISSS majors compared to the college and university rates is that the ISSS major is often selected by students later in their academic career after having dropped out of another major. The major requirements, furthermore, permit a high level of flexibility so that most students who enter the major find fewer barriers to degree completion than they would in most other majors in the college and university.

Placement of graduates

We currently have no formal information regarding the placement of graduates of this program. It may be more possible to attain such information since graduates of FAU will, from this point forward, retain their FAU email addresses for life.

Strengths and opportunities that support achievement of program goals

The main strength of this program is its flexibility. This program allows students across the three campuses in which the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts & Letters has a presence to complete their degree requirements in a timely manner despite limited course offerings on the Jupiter and Davie campuses. The flexibility of this program also serves the motivated student with particular substantive interests that cross disciplinary boundaries to construct a program of study that best serves her interests and goals.

Weaknesses and threats that impede program progress

While the flexibility of this program is its strength, on one hand, it is also a source of weakness. Especially in the years prior to our addition of concentration area requirements in the 2011, the program had little structure. Students were required to complete 39 credits in Social Science courses (exclusive of coursework used to meet general education credits), at least 12 upper division credits in one discipline, and inclusion of at least 3 disciplines. They were also required to complete at least 2 methodology courses. Beyond the assurance of a basic understanding of social science methodology, however, we could offer no assurance that students would select their complement of courses in a way that made sense or that allowed for the progression of their academic skills. Our addition of concentration area requirements addresses this concern to an extent, but we nonetheless are constrained in our efforts at program improvement by our inability to exercise any direct control over the expected learning outcomes within disciplinary courses.

Resource analysis

The program requires little in terms of resources. Currently, this program and the college's other interdisciplinary program are directed by a full-time faculty member in the college on a small overload assignment. The College of Arts and Letters student services office, additionally, contributes vitally to the running of this program, but took on this additional responsibility in Fall 2012 without any additional staffing in their office. It is possible, I would suggest, that the program could be run at even less cost by eliminating the director and re-assigning responsibility for management of the program to the chairs of the college's social science departments.

Future Direction

Significant changes to the program have been implemented recently. The most important of these is the implementation of the concentration area requirement. Although our assessment efforts have yet to meet our satisfaction in determining the degree to which this practice has improved students' success in meeting program goals, we believe that the concentration area requirement is nonetheless a positive move in the direction of improving student performance with respect to program goals. The assessment plans for 2012-2013 have been designed with the aim of getting a better sense of students' mastery in their concentration area. While we have had the concentration area requirement for a few years now, it will be only at the end of this academic year that we will do a full assessment of student performance across all of their concentration area courses (taken in their last semester).

Of secondary importance is the reversion to a prior practice of allowing former Social Science education students to apply up to 15 relevant education credits to the major. This practice had been eliminated in 2008 based on the assumption that this drew poorer students (education "drop-outs") to the college and lessened the rigor of the program. After meeting with and talking to many prospective students, however, the director reached the conclusion that many of the education "drop-outs" were dropping out not because of academic failure but rather because the demands of their family and work lives made it impossible for them to complete the student teaching requirement in their education degree program. Upon the recommendation of the external program reviewed for the college's other interdisciplinary program director, we have restored the practice. We expect that this may increase our majors somewhat; more importantly, we hope that it will facilitate the timely graduation of students' whose life demands have proved a barrier to completing less flexible programs.

As suggested above in the resource analysis section, a possible change to the program would be to assign responsibility for its management to the chairs of the college's social science departments (or to a representative from those departments). A possible benefit of such an approach would be to increase communication between social science chairs about their respective program goals such that they might be able to reach some consensus on meaningful program goals for the interdisciplinary degree as an interdisciplinary degree and perhaps come to agreement on some general requirements for the program that go beyond the concentration area requirements. This could be done by department chairs alone or by retaining a director who would coordinate such efforts.

Another possible change, one that might follow from more focused coordination among social science chairs and departments, however, is a more unified set of learning goals and corresponding assessment approach. Assessing student performance only in their concentration area does not allow assessment of the student's broader competence in social science or of any added value of their interdisciplinary work. Assessing their concentration area performance is valuable and arguably sufficient, especially if we can establish that interdisciplinary students perform as well as disciplinary majors in their concentration area coursework. Ideally, however, it would be preferable to be able to establish some added value of an interdisciplinary program.

3-5 broad questions for the review team to answer with respect to a unit's current state and aspirations

1. Should we revert to the practice of requiring a particular number of social science methodology courses for this major? While most majors will take at least 1 methodology course in the context of completing their concentration area requirements, the requirements of some concentrations permit avoidance of any methodology courses. Few students in the major will be likely to take 2 methodology courses given the changes to our requirements. Since one commonality across social science disciplines is their commitment to understanding people and the world in some sort of scientific manner, we have been second-guessing our removal of the methodology requirement.
2. Should we aim for a more particular set of program goals that crosses social science disciplines rather than focusing only on program goals within the concentration area? Should we reconsider our choice of building the program around a concentration area, perhaps focusing more on breadth and distribution? Are there other possibilities for restructuring the program that would be superior to the current structure?
3. Assuming lack of resources (and programmatic feasibility) of offering a capstone course for social science majors or any interdisciplinary courses, should we consider identifying a set of core courses in all or some of our social science disciplines that we would require students to take some number of? If so, what criteria should we use to determine which courses to consider "core"?
4. Should we abolish the program (or merge it with the college's other Interdisciplinary Studies: Arts and Humanities program)?
5. What are some other ideas for improving the quality of the program and/or developing a more effective approach for monitoring student accomplishment in the major?

Appendix A
Interdisciplinary Studies: Social Science
Academic Learning Compact

The B.A. in Social Science is an interdisciplinary major designed to allow students to gain a breadth of knowledge in several social science fields. The major requires students to select a concentration area in consultation with an advisor. Each concentration area has particular requirements, as determined by the respective program or discipline.

Content Knowledge: Students will demonstrate mastery of content knowledge within the area of concentration. The proficiency standards for content knowledge in the concentration area are essentially the same as those identified by the academic learning compacts for majors in the respective social science disciplines, and students will be assessed on their work in the courses identified by the discipline departments.

Communication Skills: Students will demonstrate mastery of at least one communication skill within the area of concentration. The proficiency standards for communication skills in the concentration area are essentially the same as those identified by the academic learning compacts for majors in the respective social science disciplines, and students will be assessed on their work in the courses identified by the discipline departments.

Critical Thinking Skills: Students will demonstrate mastery of critical thinking skills within the area of concentration. The proficiency standards for critical thinking skills in the concentration area are essentially the same as those identified by the academic learning compacts for majors in the respective social science disciplines, and students will be assessed on their work in the courses identified by the discipline departments.

Appendix B Assessment report 2011-2012 and assessment plan 2012-2013

Assessment results 2011-2012

Assessment Plan
<p style="text-align: center;">Florida Atlantic University Super-Division: Academic Unit College/Division: Arts & Letters Department: Non-Departmental Programs Program: BA SOCIAL SCIENCE Plan Type: Learning Outcomes Plan Period: 2011-2012 Plan Status: Report approved (complete) Current Plan Status Set On: 2/3/2013 1:25:11 PM Current Time/Date: 4/5/2013 5:14:01 PM</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Plan developed by: Mary Branaman</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Current contact person(s) for plan: Lynn Appleton Heather Coltman Mary Branaman</p> <div style="background-color: yellow; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"><p>This plan currently has 3 outcomes.</p><p>All steps in the plan have been completed.</p><p>Move to: Outcome 1 Outcome 2 Outcome 3</p></div>
Assessment Plan/Report Feedback
<p>Outcome: 1 (ID: 20061 Last saved: 1/13/2013 3:19:33 PM) Description & Methodology</p> <p>Outcome Description CONTENT KNOWLEDGE: Students will demonstrate mastery of content knowledge within the area of concentration.</p> <p>Academic Learning Compact (ALC) Categories related to this outcome: <i>Content Knowledge</i></p> <p>FAU Strategic Plan related goals & objectives:</p>

Goal 1, Objective 1: Assure student achievement in baccalaureate degree programs by developing and implementing Academic Learning Compacts

Implementing Strategy

Students entering the program since Fall 2011 have agreed to complete the requirements of a concentration area in an approved social science discipline. The content knowledge of Interdisciplinary Studies: Social Science majors is assessed on the basis of work they complete in required courses in their concentration. The coursework of all interdisciplinary studies: social science majors (who entered the program in Fall 2011 or later) in any of the required concentration courses during Spring 2012 will be collected for the purpose of assessment.

Assessment Method

A faculty committee including the director of Interdisciplinary Studies and 2-4 representatives from social science disciplines will review the level of content knowledge demonstrated by students in the required concentration area courses.

Criterion for success

Students should demonstrate an appropriate level of content knowledge, as determined by the disciplinary standards of the department; guided by concentration area representatives, interdisciplinary social science students should meet the standards established by the discipline and should perform at levels comparable to those of disciplinary students.

Comments about plan made by reviewers:

Results

Data Summary

There were a total of 12 students who were taking one of the required concentration area courses during the Spring 2012 semester. Two of these students was taking 2 required concentration area courses, yielding a total sample of 14 sets of coursework for evaluation.

Our analysis of the performance of these 12 students led us to conclude that 2 performed at a superior level, 6 performed at a level comparable to 'B' students, and 4 performed at a below average level. Although we are concerned with the relatively high proportion of students performing at a below average level, all nonetheless demonstrated sufficient competence in content knowledge. (The ALCs of each of the AL social science departments require the demonstration of basic competence in content knowledge to be a precondition of a passing grade in the core courses.) Because of a flaw in our assessment plan, we were required to look at overall course grades of these students in addition to the samples of work to reach these conclusions. (Instead of asking for samples of 'A' work, we should have asked for samples of average work and specifically for a sample of average work of disciplinary majors.)

Program Improvement

We were unsatisfied with the data we obtained using the 2011-2012 assessment plan. Not

only did it yield a sample size smaller than we had expected, but the required core courses in the AL social science disciplines are mostly methodology courses and hence are not optimal for the assessment of competence in content knowledge. Because of the inadequacy of this data, we have changed our assessment plan for the 2012-2013 academic year. The 2011-2012 assessment plan was developed based on program requirements that required majors to complete the course(s) in their concentration area that the respective disciplines used for their disciplinary assessment. We concluded that this was an artificial requirement that did not serve our majors particularly well. Beginning in the summer of 2012, we modified our concentration area requirements such that they are now identical to the requirements of a disciplinary minor or certificate program. We anticipate that this will lead to a more coherent program of study for our majors.

For the 2012-2013 academic year, we plan to assess the performance of our majors in all courses in their concentration area and, when possible, to assess the progression of student performance over the course of their program of study.

Supporting Documents

Comments about results made by reviewer:

Outcome: 2

(ID: 20062 Last saved: 1/13/2013 3:45:29 PM)

Description & Methodology

Outcome Description

COMMUNICATION SKILLS: Students will demonstrate communication skills as applied in the area of concentration.

Academic Learning Compact (ALC) Categories related to this outcome:

Communication

Written Communication

Oral Communication

Multimedia/Graphic communication

Team/Collaborative communication

FAU Strategic Plan related goals & objectives:

Goal 1(all objectives): Providing Increased Access to Higher Education

Goal 1, Objective 1: Assure student achievement in baccalaureate degree programs by developing and implementing Academic Learning Compacts

Goal 1, Objective 2: Foster institutional commitment to student satisfaction and success

Goal 1, Objective 3: Promote the academic success and improve the retention rate of first-time-in-college (FTIC) students

Goal 1, Objective 4: Promote timely completion of degrees and increase the graduation rate of FTIC students

Goal 1, Objective 5: Promote the timely completion of degrees and increase the graduation rate of Associate in Arts transfer students

Implementing Strategy

Students entering the program since Fall 2011 have agreed to complete the requirements of a concentration area in one of the College of Arts and Letters social science disciplines. The communication skills of Interdisciplinary Studies: Social Science majors is assessed on the basis of work they complete in required courses in their concentration. The coursework of all interdisciplinary studies: social science majors (who entered the program in Fall 2011 or later) in any of the required concentration courses during Spring 2012 will be collected for the purpose of assessment.

Assessment Method

A faculty committee including the director of Interdisciplinary Studies and 2-4 representatives from college social science disciplines will review the level of communication skills demonstrated by students in the required concentration area courses.

Criterion for success

Students should demonstrate an appropriate level of communication skills, as determined by the disciplinary standards of the department; guided by concentration area representatives, interdisciplinary degree students should meet the standards established by the discipline and should perform at levels comparable to those of disciplinary students.

Comments about plan made by reviewers:

Results

Data Summary

There were a total of 12 students who were taking one of the required concentration area courses during the Spring 2012 semester. Two of these students was taking 2 required concentration area courses, yielding a total sample of 14 sets of coursework for evaluation.

Our analysis of the performance of these 12 students led us to conclude that 2 performed at a superior level, 6 performed at a level comparable to 'B' students, and 4 performed at a below average level. Although we are concerned with the relatively high proportion of students performing at a below average level, all nonetheless demonstrated sufficient competence in written communication skills. (The ALCs of each of the AL social science departments require the demonstration of basic competence in written communication skills to be a precondition of a passing grade in the core courses.) Because of a flaw in our assessment plan, we were required to look at overall course grades of these students in addition to the samples of work to reach these conclusions. (Instead of asking for samples of 'A' work, we should have asked for samples of average work and specifically for a sample of average work of disciplinary majors.)

Program Improvement

We were unsatisfied with the data we obtained using the 2011-2012 assessment plan. Not only did it yield a sample size smaller than we had expected, but the required core courses in the AL social science disciplines are mostly methodology courses and hence are not optimal for the assessment of competence in written communication. Although it was possible to evaluate the competence of each student in written communication by some means (if only through a short essay on an exam), not all of the core courses required term papers or any significant writing assignment.

Due to our dissatisfaction with the current plan, we have changed our assessment plan for the 2012-2013 academic year. The 2011-2012 assessment plan was developed based on program requirements that required majors to complete the course(s) in their concentration area that the respective disciplines used for their disciplinary assessment. We concluded that this was an artificial requirement that did not serve our majors particularly well. Beginning in the summer of 2012, we modified our concentration area requirements such that they are now identical to the requirements of a disciplinary minor or certificate program. We anticipate that this will lead to a more coherent program of study for our majors.

For the 2012-2013 academic year, we plan to assess the performance of our majors in all courses in their concentration area and, when possible, to assess the progression of student performance over the course of their program of study.

Supporting Documents**Comments about results made by reviewer:****Outcome: 3**

(ID: 20060 Last saved: 1/13/2013 3:53:22 PM)

Description & Methodology

Outcome Description

CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS: Students will demonstrate the critical thinking skills as applied in the area of concentration.

Academic Learning Compact (ALC) Categories related to this outcome:

Critical Thinking

Analytical Skills

Creative Skills

Practical Skills

FAU Strategic Plan related goals & objectives:

Goal 1(all objectives): Providing Increased Access to Higher Education

Goal 1, Objective 1: Assure student achievement in baccalaureate degree programs by

developing and implementing Academic Learning Compacts

Goal 1, Objective 2: Foster institutional commitment to student satisfaction and success

Goal 1, Objective 3: Promote the academic success and improve the retention rate of first-time-in-college (FTIC) students

Goal 1, Objective 4: Promote timely completion of degrees and increase the graduation rate of FTIC students

Goal 1, Objective 5: Promote the timely completion of degrees and increase the graduation rate of Associate in Arts transfer students

Implementing Strategy

Students entering the program since Fall 2011 have agreed to complete the requirements of a concentration area in one of the college social science disciplines. The critical thinking skills of Interdisciplinary Studies: Social Science majors are assessed on the basis of work they complete in required courses in their concentration. The coursework of all interdisciplinary studies: social science majors (who entered the program in Fall 2011 or later) in any of the required concentration courses during Spring 2012 will be collected for the purpose of assessment.

Assessment Method

A faculty committee including the director of Interdisciplinary Studies and 2-4 representatives from college social science disciplines will review the level of communication skills demonstrated by students in the required concentration area courses.

Criterion for success

Students should demonstrate an appropriate level of critical thinking skills, as determined by the disciplinary standards of the department; guided by concentration area representatives, interdisciplinary degree students should meet the standards established by the discipline and should perform at levels comparable to those of disciplinary students.

Comments about plan made by reviewers:

Results

Data Summary

There were a total of 12 students who were taking one of the required concentration area courses during the Spring 2012 semester. Two of these students were taking 2 required concentration area courses, yielding a total sample of 14 sets of coursework for evaluation.

Our analysis of the performance of these 12 students led us to conclude that 2 performed at a superior level, 6 performed at a level comparable to 'B' students, and 4 performed at a below average level. Although we are concerned with the relatively high proportion of students performing at a below average level, all nonetheless demonstrated sufficient competence in

critical thinking skills. (The ALCs of each of the AL social science departments require the demonstration of basic competence in critical thinking skills to be a precondition of a passing grade in the core courses.) Because of a flaw in our assessment plan, we were required to look at overall course grades of these students in addition to the samples of work to reach these conclusions. (Instead of asking for samples of 'A' work, we should also have asked for samples of average work and specifically for a sample of average work of disciplinary majors.)

Program Improvement

We were unsatisfied with the data we obtained using the 2011-2012 assessment plan. Not only did it yield a sample size smaller than we had wished for, but the required core courses in the AL social science disciplines upon which our assessment was based offer a very limited view of a students' overall performance in the major.

Due to our dissatisfaction with the current plan, we have changed our assessment plan for the 2012-2013 academic year. The 2011-2012 assessment plan was developed based on program requirements that required majors to complete the course(s) in their concentration area that the respective disciplines used for their disciplinary assessment. We concluded that this was an artificial requirement that did not serve our majors particularly well. Beginning in the summer of 2012, we modified our concentration area requirements such that they are now identical to the requirements of a disciplinary minor or certificate program. We anticipate that this will lead to a more coherent program of study for our majors.

For the 2012-2013 academic year, we plan to assess the performance of our majors in all courses in their concentration area and, when possible, to assess the progression of student performance over the course of their program of study.

Assessment plan 2012-2013

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Assessment Plan

Florida Atlantic University
Super-Division: **Academic Unit**
College/Division: **Arts & Letters**
Department: **Non-Departmental Programs**
Program: **BA SOCIAL SCIENCE**
Plan Type: **Learning Outcomes Plan**
Period: **2012-2013**

Plan Status: **Enter report of results**
Current Plan Status Set On: **2/3/2013 1:25:32 PM**
Current Time/Date: **4/5/2013 5:12:48 PM**

Plan developed by:
Mary Branaman [Edit](#)

Current contact person(s) for plan:
[Lynn Appleton](#) [Heather Coltman](#) [Mary Branaman](#)

This plan currently has 3 outcomes.

Click the "Edit" button listed in the Results portion of each outcome to enter results for that outcome.

Move to: [Outcome 1](#) [Outcome 2](#) [Outcome 3](#)

[Add New Outcome](#)

Assessment Plan/Report Feedback

Outcome: 1 [Delete](#) Move this item: [Down](#)
(ID: 21320 Last saved: 1/17/2013 5:50:04 PM)

Description & Methodology [Edit](#)

Outcome Description

CONTENT KNOWLEDGE: Students will demonstrate mastery of content knowledge within the area of concentration.

Academic Learning Compact (ALC) Categories related to this outcome:

Content Knowledge

FAU Strategic Plan related goals & objectives:

Goal 1, Objective 1: Assure student achievement in baccalaureate degree programs by developing and implementing Academic Learning Compacts

Implementing Strategy

Students entering the program since Fall 2011 are required to select and complete the requirements for a concentration area in an approved social science discipline. The content knowledge of Interdisciplinary Studies: Social Science majors is assessed on the basis of work they complete in courses in their concentration. The coursework of all interdisciplinary studies: social science majors (who entered the program in Fall 2011 or later) in any of their concentration area courses will be collected at the end of the Spring 2013 semester.

Assessment Method

A faculty committee including the director of Interdisciplinary Studies and 2-4 representatives from social science disciplines will review the level of content knowledge demonstrated by students in all concentration area courses in which they are enrolled during the Spring 2013 semester. Particularly in those cases where students are in multiple concentration area courses in a given semester, their work in all courses will be evaluated collectively to provide a broader assessment of their content knowledge in their concentration area.

We will rely on two, possibly 3, sources to aid in our appropriate evaluation of disciplinary content knowledge. We will rely on concentration area representatives on the committee to explain to the rest of the committee the disciplinary standards for content knowledge. We will also request from faculty who submit student work to us for assessment copies of superior and average work produced by their own majors. When available we will include as part of our evaluation any relevant disciplinary assessment results.

Criterion for success

Students should demonstrate an appropriate level of content knowledge and should perform at levels comparable to those of disciplinary students.

Students should demonstrate an appropriate level of content knowledge. The assessment committee will review any and all available student work that is deemed to be demonstrative of content knowledge (exams, essays, term papers). This work will be evaluated on a 4-point scale: 1) Superior: equal to the knowledge of the top students in social science majors; 2) Proficient: equivalent to that of the average social science major; 3) Marginally proficient: Below the average social science majors; 4) unacceptable. Our criterion for success is to have 90% of ISSS majors to demonstrate proficiency in content knowledge 20% to demonstrate superior communication skills.

Comments about plan made by reviewers:

Results [Edit](#)

Data Summary

Program Improvement

Supporting Documents [Add/Manage Documents](#)

Comments about results made by reviewer:

Outcome: 2 [Delete](#) Move this item: [Up](#) [Down](#)

(ID: 21321 Last saved: 1/17/2013 6:42:27 PM)

Description & Methodology [Edit](#)

Outcome Description

COMMUNICATION SKILLS: Students will demonstrate proficient written communication skills by the time of completion of major requirements.

Academic Learning Compact (ALC) Categories related to this outcome:

Communication

Written Communication

FAU Strategic Plan related goals & objectives:

Goal 1(all objectives): Providing Increased Access to Higher Education

Goal 1, Objective 1: Assure student achievement in baccalaureate degree programs by developing and implementing Academic Learning Compacts

Goal 1, Objective 2: Foster institutional commitment to student satisfaction and success

Goal 1, Objective 3: Promote the academic success and improve the retention rate of first-time-in-college (FTIC) students

Goal 1, Objective 4: Promote timely completion of degrees and increase the graduation rate of FTIC students

Goal 1, Objective 5: Promote the timely completion of degrees and increase the graduation rate of Associate in Arts transfer students

Implementing Strategy

The communication skills of Interdisciplinary Studies: Social Science majors will be assessed on the basis of work they complete in any of their spring 2013 major coursework. The written work (i.e., term papers, essay exams, or short written assignments of any kind) of those interdisciplinary studies: social science majors who will have completed their major requirements by the end of the Spring 2013 semester will be collected from instructors of their major courses (within Arts and Letters only). The work of students from more than one major courses will be considered as a single unit, allowing a broader view of their overall level of written communication skills.

Assessment Method

A faculty committee including the director of Interdisciplinary Studies and 2-4 representatives from college social science disciplines will review the level of communication skills demonstrated by students by evaluating the quality of written work provided to us by the instructors of courses in the major.

Criterion for success

Students should demonstrate an appropriate level of communication skills. The assessment committee will assess written work on a 4-point scale: 1 superior; 2) acceptable, or average; 3) marginally acceptable; 4) unacceptable. Our criterion for success is to have 90% of ISSS majors to demonstrate acceptable communication skills and 20% to demonstrate superior communication skills.

Comments about plan made by reviewers:

Results [Edit](#)

Data Summary

Program Improvement

Supporting Documents [Add/Manage Documents](#)

Comments about results made by reviewer:

Outcome: 3 [Delete](#) Move this item: [Up](#)
(ID: 21319 Last saved: 1/17/2013 6:04:12 PM)

Description & Methodology [Edit](#)

Outcome Description

CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS: Students will demonstrate a level of critical analytic thinking skills within their concentration area coursework that is equivalent (or better) than that of students in disciplinary majors.

Academic Learning Compact (ALC) Categories related to this outcome:

Critical Thinking

Analytical Skills

FAU Strategic Plan related goals & objectives:

Goal 1(all objectives): Providing Increased Access to Higher Education

Goal 1, Objective 1: Assure student achievement in baccalaureate degree programs by developing and implementing Academic Learning Compacts

Goal 1, Objective 2: Foster institutional commitment to student satisfaction and success

Goal 1, Objective 3: Promote the academic success and improve the retention rate of first-time-in-college (FTIC) students

Goal 1, Objective 4: Promote timely completion of degrees and increase the graduation rate of FTIC students

Goal 1, Objective 5: Promote the timely completion of degrees and increase the graduation rate of Associate in Arts transfer students

Implementing Strategy

The critical analytic thinking skills of Interdisciplinary Studies: Social Science majors will be assessed on the basis of work they complete in any of their spring 2013 concentration area courses. All work deemed by the committee to be demonstrative of critical analytic thinking

skills will be collected from course instructors. The work of students from more than one concentration area courses will be considered as a single unit, allowing a broader view of their overall level of critical analytic thinking skills.

Assessment Method

A faculty committee including the director of Interdisciplinary Studies and 2-4 representatives from college social science disciplines will review the level of critical analytic thinking skills demonstrated by students in their final courses in the concentration area.

Criterion for success

Students should demonstrate an appropriate level of critical analytic thinking skills. The assessment committee will review any and all available student work that is deemed to be demonstrative of critical thinking skills. This work will be evaluated on a 4-point scale: 1) Superior: equal to the critical thinking skills of the top students in social science majors; 2) Proficient: equivalent to that of the average social science major; 3) Marginally proficient: Below the average social science majors; 4) unacceptable. Our criterion for success is to have 90% of ISSS majors to demonstrate proficiency in critical analytic thinking skills and 20% to demonstrate superior critical thinking skills.

Comments about plan made by reviewers:

Results [Edit](#)

Data Summary

Program Improvement

Supporting Documents [Add/Manage Documents](#)

Comments about results made by reviewer:

Concentration area requirements (must complete requirements for at least one concentration area):

Concentration in Anthropology

15 credits of 3000-4000 level Anthropology courses.

Concentration in Communication Studies

MMC 1540, 3 credits

COM 2053, 3 credits

4 upper division courses with COM, SPC or MMC prefixes

Total credits in concentration area: 18

At least 15 of the 18 credits must be taken at FAU.

Concentration in History

18 credits of History courses in at least 2 out of 5 geographical areas: U.S. (AMH); European (EUH), Latin American (LAH), Africa, and Non-Western. At least 15 of the 18 credits must be upper division.

Concentration in Political Science

15 credits including POS 2041 (or the equivalent) and 12 credits of upper division (3000 and 4000-level) Political Science courses.

Concentration in Sociology

15 credits of Sociology coursework; 12 of the 15 credits must be upper division (3000 or 4000-level).

Florida Atlantic University
Interdisciplinary Studies: Social Sciences
Program Review
May 22, 2013

Prepared by Robert E. Crew, Jr. (Florida State University) and Russell Ivy (FAU)

Introduction

Dr. Robert Crew and Dr. Russell Ivy reviewed the Interdisciplinary Social Sciences program at FAU on April 29, 2013. The reviewers were provided a self-study report on the program by Dr. Ann Branaman as well as a series of supporting documents. In addition, the reviewers met with faculty, staff and students in the program and with university administrators. Those interviewed included Ed Pratt, Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Diane Alperin, Associate Provost of Academic Programs and Personnel, Heather Coltman, Interim Dean of the College of Arts and Letters, Chairs of the Departments of Anthropology and Sociology, the Director for the Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies Program, faculty from the Department of History and two ISS undergraduate students. Further clarification on advising-related questions was provided later through contact with staff from the student services office from the College of Arts and Letters.

Program Mission and Purpose.

According to the self-study report, the ISS program exists “to contribute to the goal of expanded access to the BA degree.” To do so, it utilizes the courses from academic departments in the College of Arts and Letters, in the College of Science and in the College of Business. It also employs courses from the Center for Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Ethnic Studies and Peace Studies. Students are required to complete 39 credit hours of courses chosen from 7 “concentration areas” five of which are traditional academic disciplines in the social sciences. Three areas of concentration must be selected, each roughly equivalent to a minor in that discipline. The self-study indicates that the College does not actively recruit for this major, although it is introduced to incoming and prospective students at recruitment events and orientations.

The ISS program has no faculty, staff, courses or budget of its own. Nor does it have a coordinative or advisory mechanism that represents the disciplines that make up the program. Program administration is carried out by a Program Director who serves simultaneously as a member of the faculty in the Department of Sociology and as Director in another of the university’s interdisciplinary programs, in Arts and Humanities. Students are advised by the student services office in the College of Arts and Letters in addition to the Program Director. Further contact by the reviewers with the advising office indicates that the College does not “push” or try to “sell” the major, yet offers it as an alternative for students, who after taking a great deal of coursework in a variety of disciplines are having difficulty identifying a major, or for students who have not had success in a chosen major. After students declare the major, they are typically advised by the Program Director.

Program Analysis.

As indicated above, the mission of the ISS program is “to contribute to the goal of expanded access to the BA degree.” The ISS program performs this mission well and is surely a profit center for the university, given the virtual absence of resources provided to it directly. The degree has clearly become an important mechanism to retain FAU students who seem to be floundering, and to allow them to complete a degree. The number of students served has fluctuated over the time period 2002 to 2013, with a high of 173 in 2006 to the current 116. Some of this fluctuation is explained by policy decisions related to the use of coursework from Social Science Education to satisfy ISS degree requirements. Another contributor to the fluctuation appears to be a product of the point in time when ISS students declare the major and has been addressed with a new policy requiring students to submit a plan of study prior to declaring an ISS major. In short, the degree appears to be relatively stable over the past 10 years, thus demonstrating a university need. Students interviewed indicated high satisfaction with the program in general, but also indicated that they wish they had known about the program earlier and wish that the college advising office would be more aggressive in mentoring students into the program. The students indicated that they personally knew no other students in the ISS program, which they saw as a problem not faced by students who major in traditional, department-based disciplines, and this left them feeling a little “on their own” at times.

Despite the relative stability in student numbers, there are some basic problems and issues of concern that are evident in the program. Most of these issues relate to the fact that, as it currently operates, the program is multi-disciplinary as opposed to truly interdisciplinary. First, there is little sense of an administrative or intellectual “home” for the ISS program. Students are provided minimal advising, due to resource limitations and heavy demands on the time of the Program Director, there are no identifiable ISS faculty and no direct ties with a representative of the individual disciplines that make up the program. As Gertrude Stein said about Oakland, California, “there is no there, there” for the ISS program. It has the characteristics of an administrative process rather than an academic endeavor. The result is that students are not drawn into the interdisciplinary enterprise, as they are into individual disciplines, are given no sense of the possibilities involved in interdisciplinary education and receive varying levels of academic and personal guidance.

Second, exclusive focus on an administrative process goal to the exclusion of an educational goal shortchanges students intellectually. Interdisciplinarity is not achieved simply through the accumulation of a number of courses from a variety of disciplines. Rather it requires an *integration* of knowledge from separate disciplines that brings about common ground between conflicting insights and *a cognitive advancement or addition to knowledge*. The use of concentration areas as defined by the ISS program at FAU does not really satisfy this condition.

Finally, the substantial variability in programs of study by students in the ISS degree makes it difficult for the University to set program goals for the degree and to determine the extent to which they have been achieved. Currently, individual program goals are set to those in the discipline of the primary concentration chosen by each student and progress toward them are assessed through reading papers

produced by students in a number of courses within their primary concentration. Based on the interviews, all involved in this process recognize its limitations.

It should be said that the self-study report and most, but not all, of the individuals with whom we spoke during our visit, recognize these limitations, are anxious to resolve them and sought guidance in this regard. Indicative of this self-awareness, the Program Director asked for advice on four topics: 1) should the program require a particular number of social science methodology courses; 2) should the program create a set of program goals that cross disciplinary lines; 3) should a set of core courses be required; and 4) should the program be abolished? In the following paragraphs we address these questions and offer several suggestions.

Recommendations

1. The ISS degree should continue to be offered at Florida Atlantic University. It meets a demonstrated need within the university and if tweaked a bit, has the potential to provide a unique and valuable educational experience to students, as opposed to merely existing as a default or catchall degree for floundering students. Indeed, there is an argument that a complex technological society has problems that *require* interdisciplinary solutions. FAU should fully embrace the synergism of a truly interdisciplinary program such as this could become, and promote this as an important strength of the College of Arts and Letters. However, one of the basic problems of the ISS degree program, as currently structured, is a lack of identity and commitment within the campus community. The suggestions below should help the program become more than a catchall degree of convenience.

In order to properly advise students and to provide them the kind of intellectual home offered by traditional disciplinary departments, *the ISS program should be accorded the administrative status given mainline academic disciplines and be awarded budget and administrative staff commensurate with the size of the major*. It should also be asked to create an advisory/oversight committee composed of representatives of participating disciplinary units. This advisory board should strive to promote the interdisciplinary nature of the degree through curriculum review and enhancement as well as through organized events, lecture series, symposia, etc. Membership in the Association of Interdisciplinary Studies (AIS) and similar organizations should be encouraged.

As long as the program is managed by a person on an overload, or “on loan” from an independent academic department, it is dependent upon advisors who do not have time to adequately serve the program, are not specifically knowledgeable about or necessarily sympathetic to the degree and its possibilities and is taught by faculty whose primary focus is in a traditional academic discipline, the program will be seen as a “step child” and will be unlikely to maximize its potential of providing a unique educational experience.

2. We recommend continuation of the requirement that all majors complete at least one course in social science research methods, preferably one designed specifically for the integrated social science approach. It is these courses that provide the underlying logic for social science inquiry and provide a minimum of interdisciplinarity. Some of those interviewed indicated that a methods course was not practical due to the great variability of coursework and concentrations selected by the students. The

reviewers, however, disagree in that there are basic skill sets in methodology that cut across the social sciences.

3. The ISS curriculum should be re-structured in order to provide an integrative experience that will produce cognitive advancement over and beyond the knowledge provided in a series of marginally related courses. We propose two alternatives to achieve this goal.

1. Create concentrations that focus on substantive arenas of interest (i.e. law and society, environmental studies, public service or others) that will allow individual disciplines to bring their particular knowledge and skills to bear on the understanding and resolution of issues and problems in these arenas. This option permits the university to utilize current faculty resources to create areas of study that are suited to existing expertise and to design program goals directly applicable to the particular course of study.

Program goals may be included specifically in a required course(s) in each concentration and tested for through examination of student work in these courses. Alternatively, the goals may be included in multiple courses and tested for in a process that is analogous to that currently in place in the ISS program, substituting areas of substantive concentration for the existing disciplinary focus.

2. Create a single capstone course that is problem/issues oriented and that would be amenable to an examination from the perspective of multiple disciplines. The specific issue may change from year to year. Program goals will be built into each of these courses and examined for attainment at the end the course. There could be interesting QEP implications for this course.

**APR Action Plan
2013**

DEPARTMENT: Interdisciplinary Studies Social Science

#	Goals and Objectives Action Item	Individual(s) Responsible	Resources Needed	Action Taken/ Status	Projected Start Date	Target Date for Completion	Progress Review Date (if needed)	Funding Request	Dean's Support
Recommendation 1: Grant program departmental status with a commensurate budget									
	Dean's office is addressing the administrative structure of this degree and will make a decision this year.	Associate Dean and Chairs	0	Discussions under way	9/1/2013	2/1/2014		Unknown at this time.	I support this course of action.
Recommendation 2: Require all majors to take one methods course in Social Science research									
	Revise curricula plan to include the requirement of one methods course from the social sciences.	Associate Dean and Chairs	0	Discussions under way	9/1/2013	2/1/2014		0	I support this course of action.
Recommendation 3: Creation of an intergrative experience for majors via better articulated concentrations or a capstone course									
	Program should consider revision of the concentrations rather than a capstone course.	Associate Dean and Chairs	0	Discussions under way	9/1/2013	2/1/2014		0	I support this course of action.