

INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES COMMITTEE REPORT OF ACTIVITIES

APRIL 2009

1. INDIVIDUAL INTERDISCIPLINARY GRADUATE PROGRAMS

The College of Graduate Studies and Research offers the Individual Interdisciplinary Graduate program for M.A, M.Sc. and Ph.D. candidates whose research falls outside traditional academic boundaries. The Interdisciplinary Studies Committee administers the Individual Interdisciplinary Graduate Program and maintains a website (<http://www.usask.ca/cgsr/interd>) that contains details on the application procedure, scholarships, and the InterD seminar. This website continues to be updated to serve as the key source of information for both prospective and current students in the InterD program.

Over the past decade the InterD graduate program has interacted closely with graduate programs of other departments and colleges to ensure the necessary flexibility required for InterD students to complete an interdisciplinary program yet enjoy affiliation with an established academic unit. Such relations have enhanced the stability of the Individual Interdisciplinary Graduate Program but in no way has impinged upon or competed with these traditional programs.

Candidates interested in Interdisciplinary Studies are responsible for developing the program proposal, which must be approved by the Interdisciplinary Studies Committee. To be considered "interdisciplinary", the proposed program must integrate course work and research into a concise program that is not available within the traditional academic setting.

2. INTERDISCIPLINARY GRADUATE COURSES

INTD 898.3/899.6 - Special Topics. Topics are selected according to the student's area of interest.

INTD 990 – Seminar. Students are required to attend and to present at least one seminar.

INTD 994 – Research. Students writing a Master's Thesis must register in this course.

INTD 996 – Research. Students writing a Ph.D. Thesis must register in this course.

In addition to these, students also take interest area specific graduate courses.

3. INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The elected membership to the Committee, their affiliation with departments and interdisciplinary area representation are listed below.

The members for 2008-09

G. Khachatourians (Chair), Food & Bioproduct Sciences, Life Sciences

J. Alcorn, Pharmacy, Life Sciences

J. Porter, History, Humanities & Fine Arts

Y. H. Lin, Chemical Engineering

J. Kells, Civil and Geological Engineering

A. Aitken, Geography & Planning, Social Sciences

M. Gertler, Sociology, Social Sciences

GSA Representative

Muriell Miller – Director Graduate Programs, CGSR

T. Crowe - Associate Dean, CGSR

L. Martz - Dean, CGSR

4. STUDENTS and GRADUATING CLASS

Presently there are 41 students registered in Individual Interdisciplinary Graduate Programs (a decrease of 3 from the previous academic year) of which there are 12 students in Master of Arts programs, 5 students in Master of Science programs and 24 students in Ph.D. programs. Admissions for 5 other students have been approved and the students will start their programs in September of 2009.

The program has graduated 7 students during this period: 4 PhD, 1 MA and 2 MSc.

5. INTERD SEMINARS

The INTD 990 Seminar is held on a monthly basis. These seminars are aimed at building a community of future scholars. There were 6 seminar meetings and 10 presentations. Interdisciplinary students must attend a predetermined number of Interdisciplinary Seminars over the course of the academic year. Students are required to make at least one presentation during their time in program. Seminars consist of presentations by students to their peers and faculty members.

Some of the graduate students have suggested that the 990 seminar series is a “broken” process and needs revision. Student attendance at the 990 seminars is a problem. Students have indicated that they find the presentations and resulting discussion to be very informative and a critical element of their InterD program. We continue to take attendance at the 990 seminar and provide detailed audience feedback for presenters.

We recently canvassed students and faculty members for input about the 990 seminar series. We will use these comments to re-evaluate the nature of 990 seminar requirement and the role of these seminars in the students' program.

6. STUDENT ADVISORY COMMITTEES

It is gratifying to see more than 40 faculty members involved with the supervision or co-supervision and many more involved in Student Advisory Committees (SACs) of the InterD students. Although a number of InterD SAC committee members maintain a strong commitment to the supervision of their students, we have noted serious lapses in commitment with some SAC faculty members. The InterD committee is exploring mechanisms to assist such faculty members and ensure students receive appropriate supervision and success in their programs.

7. SCHOLARSHIPS

Sources of student scholarship remain a challenge for students in the InterD program. Students have applied to SSHRC, the Trudeau Foundation, and other CGSR administered Scholarships and Graduate Teaching Assistantships. Devolved scholarship funds also remain an important source of support for students in the InterD program. Some students are funded by their supervisors or are self-funded.

8. CONCENTRATION AREAS

A number of students enter the program with the specific aim of training in research focused around a general topic or concentration area or a group of faculty that interact quite closely. Examples of such research groupings included (1) Co-operative Studies, (2) Biotechnology and Society and (3) Agriculture, Law and the Environment. With the introduction of the Schools, the latter two areas are now formally streamlined with the Schools. We will be monitoring these trends. The Interdisciplinary Committee is interested in the identification and pursuit of new concentration areas.

9. STUDENT INTERACTION

For the past 3 years the most prominent concern raised by students in the InterD program is their feeling of isolation and lack of peer or support group. To address this issue, the InterD program had a well-attended social in January 2009 and the Chair has been diligent in finding ways to enhance the InterD student experience and foster a sense of group identity and collegiality amongst them.