Teaching and Learning in Integrative Studies
2009-2010 Faculty Learning Community

Goal: To better understand student perceptions of Integrative Studies and determine whether they believe IS courses meet the goals of general education at Michigan State University.

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Integrative Studies: The Original Vision

“...That the core program will consist of courses whose subject matter areas and themes are chosen from the knowledge and skill areas of language, arts and humanities; the physical and biological sciences; and the social, economic and behavioral sciences; and the emphasis areas of international and multicultural experience, national diversity, historical consciousness, and values and ethical judgments. The emphasis areas, modes of inquiry and critical analysis will be present in all core courses. All undergraduates must take 45 quarter credits of courses in the core program. Of the 45 credits, 42 are to be taken in ways described below and 3 will be elective.”

That the core program incorporate the following features:
1. (Vertical Structure) Courses designed for study in each year of the students undergraduate program.
2. (Coherence) Cohesive sets of core courses which are intensivized in significant ways.
3. (Integration) Courses which are interdisciplinary and multicultural.

That there will be a university center of integrative studies whose functions will include:
1. Monitoring and oversight of all core courses, including a periodic review intended to assure that core courses and sequences comply with core curricular principles.
2. Development, administration, staffing and funding of trans collegiate courses.
3. Coordination and policy oversight of courses offered by the college level schools.
4. Coordination and review of the senior year "capstone" course.
5. Development and support of a research program which will focus in the design and maintenance of the core curriculum Development of programs which will support the improvement of undergraduate teaching.
6. Funding of the core faculty who are not members of the college level schools;
7. Providing funds to assist in the professional development of faculty to teach trans collegiate courses.

That all majors require a specifically designed and designated synthesis experience in the final phase of study in the major field.”


Goals of IAH

Integrative Studies in the Arts and Humanities seeks to assist students to become more familiar with ways of knowing in the arts and humanities and to be more knowledgeable and capable in a range of intellectual and expressive abilities. IAH courses encourage students:

• To engage critically with their own society, history, and culture(s)
• To learn more about the history and culture of other societies
• To focus on key ideas and issues in human experience
• To apply their learning to important issues that occur among peoples in an increasingly interconnected, interdependent world

Goals of ISGS

CISGS provides MSU undergraduates with educational opportunities for non-scientists to understand

• Ways scientists investigate and draw conclusions
• Results of this body of enquiry, using selected examples
• Social impact of science in its historical context and
• The kinds of questions science can and cannot answer.

This understanding provides students with a knowledge base for becoming tomorrow's scholars and leaders in service of Michigan, the nation and the international community. This knowledge will allow MSU students to address critical problems of the 21st century.

Data

• All students enrolled in IS in '09 and '10 (14,362 students)
• 1,594 complete responses via online survey (8.7% response rate)

“Even after the course is over, I continue to reflect on the themes covered.”

Major Findings

• The majority of students indicate their IS courses were well organized and well taught, but generally do not understand the relevance of the coursework to their course of study at MSU.
• The majority of students believe that IS courses “somewhat” meet the goals of integrative learning at MSU.
• Students report dissatisfaction with large lectures and prefer smaller class sizes that allow active learning opportunities.

Strengths of Integrative Studies:

• Providing cultural exposure
• Enhancing their understanding of global issues
• Weaknesses of Integrative Studies:

• Explaining the role of scientific methods in research

Goals of ISS

The Social Science Integrative Studies core curriculum provides an interdisciplinary introduction to the body of knowledge, theory, practice and methods that the social sciences bring to an understanding of the human condition. These sciences form a vital and integral part of a liberal education. The Social Science Integrative Studies core consists of course options designed to:

• Assist students in distinguishing their personal assumptions and beliefs from conclusions based upon critical thought and the analytical exploration of human behavioral patterns and trends.
• Expand students’ awareness of the ways that enduring and universal social issues and resolutions can be distinguished from those that are the consequence of specific or transient contemporary conditions.
• Provide multicultural, international and national perspectives on human behavior that address the particular challenges and opportunities for a multicultural and multi-ethnic American society.

Goals for Integrative Studies at MSU

Courses in Integrative Studies help students:

• Become more familiar with the ways of knowing in the arts and humanities, the biological and physical sciences, and the social sciences.
• Develop a range of intellectual abilities; including critical thinking, logical argument, appropriate use of evidence, and interpretation of varied kinds of information (quantitative, qualitative, text, image).
• Become more knowledgeable about other times, places, and cultures as well as key ideas and issues in human experience.
• Learn more about the role of the scientific method in developing a more objective understanding of the natural and social worlds.
• Appreciate the risk of knowledge and of values and ethics in understanding human behavior and solving social problems.
• Recognize responsibilities and opportunities associated with citizenship in a democratic society and an increasingly interconnected, interdependent world.

Future Directions

In 2010-2011, this FLC will work on:

• Exploring best practices to enhance learning-centered pedagogies
• Assessing faculty perspectives on Integrative Studies
• Producing a second-wave survey done face-to-face to avoid response bias.

“Even after the course is over, I continue to reflect on the themes covered.”

“"The IXX course was well taught."