

Creating a Transdisciplinary Program

Process to Create a Transdisciplinary Program

- Develop a vision and justify the value of the proposed program.
- Engage university Leadership – Provost, Deans, Associate Deans Academic
- Transdisciplinary programs are often generated by an institutional priority.
- Those without support from university leadership are more difficult to complete.
- Assess demand on campus from faculty and students.
- Identify internal champions from multiple colleges who will advocate for the program and ensure implementation.
- Complete an environmental scan and a feasibility study.
- Determine the budget available to support the program.

Budget

- The budget needs to be clearly understood and realistic.
- Identify faculty leaders in the program area and ensure Colleges support the program and/or incentivize Colleges with possibility of future faculty hires.
- Incentivize Departments by providing GTA support for courses selected as core to the program, assuming enrolment increases.
- Allocate sufficient funds for a Program Counsellor.

Consulting with students, faculty, and in the marketplace is critical for buy-in.

- Environmental scan to determine similar programs at other universities.
- Engage the Co-operative Education office to assess opportunities for work placements.
- Write a pre-proposal to inform everyone of direction.
- A subset of partners is established to provide ongoing oversight at a higher level.
- Consultation and working through departmental cultures will require many discussions.
- When involving multiple disciplines support is required throughout the chain of influence.
- Deans and Associate Deans Academic are included for their input.
- Letters of agreement are drafted among participating Colleges/Schools and Departments to ensure sustainability of the program over time.
- Stakeholders need to be assured of value to ensure that the timelines are met.
- Leader of the program committee negotiates with Chairs to include courses from their department as core to the new program, preferably by offering GTA support.

Program Development

- Identify key departments and ask Chairs to select participants for the committee
Colleges had to have representation while keeping the committee small.
- Regular weekly meetings, and motivated committee members are key to fast-tracking the development of the program.
- Establish goals and principles with this committee. Take the time to hear from everyone and ensure that the committee is working in the same direction.
- Establish benchmarks.

Cross Disciplinary & Transdisciplinary Teaching

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- Develop an institutional plan.
- Core competencies and learning outcomes were determined.
- Existing courses were identified for achieving these learning outcomes.
- Determine the structure of other programs to use existing paths to advance the new program. Will students have the prerequisite course to enroll in those selected?
- Initially, too many courses may be selected. Disciplinary experts may wish to retain their courses. Some course must be removed without disenfranchising key stakeholders.
- Identify gaps and the need for new courses. Develop the learning outcomes for the new courses.
- Establish a 'linked course' model that connected to other courses to integrate students and solve complex problems.
- Documents for the program are drafted.
- The Office of Quality Assurance provides feedback and edits.
- As with any new program, external reviewers are brought in for expert evaluation.
- Deans, ADAs and Chairs respond to the feedback from the external reviewers.
- Final documents go to Board of Undergraduate Studies and Senate for approval