

**FACULTY SENATE  
CURRICULUM COMMITTEE  
REPORT**

Members of the Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee met on October 29, 2010, at 1:15 p.m. A quorum was present. Two items were on the agenda: BA in Multidisciplinary Studies and Audit of existing core curriculum courses.

**BA IN MULTIDISCIPLINARY STUDIES**

The first item on the agenda was the proposal for a Bachelor of Arts in Multidisciplinary Studies. The Committee had reviewed the previous proposal in detail and recommended additional changes. Dr. Lawrence Williams, Vice Provost and Dean, Office of Undergraduate Studies and the Provost revised the proposal to accommodate the Committee's requests. The committee members discussed the revised proposal and recommended its approval.

**Discussion**

Although the Committee made a variety of suggestions to ensure a quality degree, one of its main focal points was the need to have a faculty coordinator, professional advising available, and faculty oversight. These requests were addressed. A program coordinator and a senior advising staff person will be assigned to this program, and a MDS Faculty Oversight Committee will be responsible for program evaluation and assessment.

The committee noted that the Multidisciplinary Studies degree is designed for individuals with unique professional and educational objectives. Real world problems are not separated into disciplinary components. Individuals need to know what kinds of information are needed and where to find that information. Integrating disciplines can help a student develop skills in problem solving, critical thinking, and synthesis. Some educators and employers see a broadly based degree program as demonstrating that an individual has self-discipline and intelligence to work through a university-level program in a variety of subject areas (i.e., that an individual can adapt to new roles with appropriate on the job training).

The MDS degree provides a framework for teaching and learning that combines specific skills, content knowledge, and creativity. The Committee considered both the strengths and the weaknesses of the program.

**Strengths of MDS Degree**

**Program Key Features**

- . *Integrative learning:* Program objective is to integrate contributions of different academic disciplines or fields of study.
- . *Graduate studies opportunities:* The degree serves as a bridge to numerous graduate programs. Graduates from similar programs have been accepted into graduate programs

in Divinity, Environmental Studies, Health Professions, Humanities, Law, Management, and Social Sciences.

- . *Flexibility:* A coherent plan of study is tailored to meet career and educational interests.
- . *Career skills:* Program incorporates communication and technology skills.
- . *Experiential learning:* Program provides for internships and service learning experiences.

#### Program Evaluation and Oversight

- . *Graduation requirements:* Students in program must meet all university undergraduate degree requirements.
- . *Program requirements:* As with all undergraduate programs, learning outcomes will be assessed and standard self studies of the program will be conducted.
- . *Program coordination:* Program coordinator and specialized advising is provided and Faculty Oversight Committee is established.

#### Challenges of the MDS Degree

MDS graduates will probably have to explain their choice of disciplines and the strengths of their degrees. This explanation is best done by having a thorough understanding of the disciplines chosen and their relationship. There are at least two schools of thought on education and employment. While some people believe that the demands of the job market should be the main determinant of academic choices, others (e.g., educators and job recruiters) suggest that the course of study is not as important as the technical and other cross-disciplinary skills acquired. However, there are certain job profiles that need specific skills and require specific education requirements (e.g., accountant, aerospace engineer, etc.).

One means that UTSA can answer criticism of interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary programs is to ensure that the capstone course has instructors who can effectively synthesize and integrate the disciplines. Thus, team teaching is recommended to overcome any deficits in requisite base of knowledge and skills. Faculty development could be provided in the form of seminars in which faculty teach one another their disciplines, and thus, provide support of multidisciplinary programs. Faculty should be encouraged to develop collaborative research partnerships.

#### Summary

Overall the MDS degree should provide students with a structured combination of study and academic experiences to enter the job market, change careers, or fulfill intellectual goals. It is recommended that the BA in Multidisciplinary Studies be approved.

#### CORE CURRICULUM AUDIT

The committee recommends that an audit of existing core curriculum courses be conducted.