

Academic Assessment Report-Cover Sheet

EVALUATION OF Individualized Interdisciplinary Program (IIP)

PROGRAM TYPE: Graduate degrees (MA and Ph.D.)

Date last review was approved by Board of Trustees: April 1994

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OHIO UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM COUNCIL

SEVEN-YEAR REVIEW (1995-2001)
INDIVIDUALIZED INTERDISCIPLINARY PROGRAM (IIP)

I. General Program Information

The Individualized Interdisciplinary Program (IIP) was created in Fall, 1978 to offer individually designed "interdisciplinary" post-baccalaureate degrees to students whose career objectives cannot satisfactorily be met through a standard Master's or Ph.D. degree within one department. Each individual program is finalized, with the close collaboration of the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Graduate Directors, between the student and a committee of three faculty members from as many departments. Department composition depends on the needs of each student. One faculty member serves as the major advisor in the "lead" department. The major advisor is responsible for facilitating the progress of the student through the defined degree program. For the 107 Master's degrees and 39 PhD degrees awarded thus far, the program has served those students with very narrowly defined career objectives that have required multiple disciplines represented in their education and training. For a few students it has proven to be the only means of receiving highly specialized interdisciplinary training for a particular job awaiting the student. Approximately two-thirds of the students who initiate an IIP complete the program and receive the degree. Many students have been OU employees or their dependents.

At the MA level, the criterion stipulates a 3.3 undergraduate average for admission consideration. At the doctoral level, the criteria stipulate a 3.3 undergraduate average and a 3.6 MA average. Student enrollment is small relative to most departmental degree programs, which varies typically from a few (lowest in 2001 with 3 MS and 1 Ph.D. students) to several (highest in 1998 with 4 MS and 7 Ph.D. students). Education and Communication appear to have the greatest number of enrollees during the review period. Although there has been a continuous stream of students passing through the program since its inception in 1978, the overall enrollment has dropped significantly since the last review period. This may be attributed to the fact that there has been no offering of tuition scholarships to those who would need them to help pay for their enrollment.

Between the last review period and present time, the office and responsibility for the program has shifted markedly. The Director of Graduate Student Services recently retired, and the responsibility for directing the IIP shifted from that position and office to the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies.

1. Faculty Profile

There are no specific faculty associated with the IIP because the curriculum is composed of graduate-level courses selected from the existing programs within the departments, colleges, and schools of OU.

2. Programmatic Practices

Since the IIP has no specific graduate faculty designated for it, students initiate inquiries concerning the possibility of enrolling in a master's or Ph.D. program. The IIP Director discusses the program requirements, reviews the students' rationales and qualifications, helps students prepare a program of study (POS), and coordinates the admission process with the

director of each program involved. The POS is designed so that one program becomes the "lead" program. This is normally the POS committee chair's school or department. In practice, the student is asked to comply with the admission requirement of each program. The student's final course work for the master's degree, and comprehensives and dissertation for the doctoral degree are usually governed by the choice of lead program. The student's progress through the program and final approval is the responsibility of the lead program's college.

The key value of the IIP lies in its status as a program of study that a student could not achieve in a discipline specific degree-granting program. By involving at least three schools or departments, the student has the opportunity to create a cohesive and meaningful set of courses that would contribute to knowledge and skill development not possible within the requirements of a discipline specific program.

3. Adequacy of Resources

There is no specific budget allocated for the IIP. The program director does not receive any compensation for his services. Because the program draws its courses and faculty from existing Ohio University departments, facilities and services are taken care of by those departments and schools.

II. Undergraduate Program Review

There are no undergraduates in the program.

III. Graduate Program Review

1) Program Goals and Curriculum

The IIP offers students the opportunity to design master and doctoral level degrees with the close collaboration of the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies, and Graduate Directors and faculty in specific degree-granting programs. The key criterion is that the degree goals are not available through an existing advanced degree program at Ohio University. Further, the course work should represent a cohesive whole and provide sufficient depth in order to meet the knowledge and/or skill acquisition for the degree requirement. There are no specific guidelines for the IIP with respect to time to degree. In this sense, the program is similar to others with adherence to the general expiration of a student's program at 6 (MA) and 7 (Ph.D.) years from matriculation.

2) Faculty

The IIP does not have a specific graduate faculty because the curriculum is selected from existing graduate-level courses within all of the departments and schools.

3) Students

Within the 1995 - 2001 review period, the IIP enrollment has been very steady on the average of 9 to 11 students except the past two years in which the enrollment (3 MA and 3 Ph.D. in 2000, and 3 MA and 1 Ph.D. in 2001) was lowest. Education and Communication appear to

have the greatest number of enrollees during the review period. It also would appear that the overall enrollment has dropped significantly since the last review period, when enrollment averaged closer to 15 - 20 students across MA and Ph.D. levels in a given year. This might be a function of no longer offering tuition scholarships to those who would need them to help pay for enrollment. During 2001- 02, there were 10 MA and 9 Ph.D. students in the program.

The entering GPA of MA students over the review period reveals some rather startling data: The average entering GPA is 3.30, consistent with the minimum requirement. However, 18% of those enrolled had GPA's between 3.0 and 3.3, and another 15% had GPA's between 2.4 and 2.99. At the Ph.D. level, the average GPA on admission is 3.66, with lowest at 3.4. Currently, the program relies on the requirements of individual schools and departments. In the case of international students, a TOFEL is required, and the minimum level is determined by the individual departments.

4) Graduates

At the master's level, the ending GPA ranged from 3.1 to 4.0, with the vast majority at 3.6 or higher. At the Ph.D. level, the ending GPA ranged 3.18 to 3.89, with the majority at 3.7 and higher. There were a significant number (8) of "no degree awarded" after the expiration of the 6 - 7 year provision for completion across both master's and doctoral level study. Otherwise, the time to degree appears to follow norms for disciplinary practice (master completion within 1 - 3 years and doctoral completion within 3 - 5 years). During the review period, 1995 - 2001, 25 MA degrees were awarded and 6 Ph.D.'s were granted.

IV. Overall Evaluation

The impression conveyed via discussions with the faculty, graduates, and current students involved with IIP is that this program is performing an important function for the university by providing master's and doctoral students with the opportunity to creatively design a degree program that meets individual interests and needs. The program was consistently described as being high in quality and best suited for students who are self-directed and seeking a unique educational experience. The program provides training for students who do not see themselves as easily fitting into an existing program, either because multiple areas of study cannot be incorporated into the course work and research training of an individual department or because the student wants to acquire multiple credentials to support a particular career goal (e.g., the medical student who wanted training in business and teaching to enhance his skills as a family medicine practitioner and academic). The IIP also allows the university to provide master's or doctoral training in areas not currently offered as a program, especially to students who have no mobility and cannot seek a program elsewhere, and offers the university an opportunity to develop programs in response to repeated IIP student interest. In these ways, the IIP meets the university's mission of holding the intellectual and personal growth of the individual as a central purpose.

Faculty noted the creativity and innovation that is possible when a student brings an interdisciplinary perspective to problem solving. Essentially, the IIP student has the potential to offer an employer the advantage of 3 disciplines rolled into a single individual. While the data available with respect to employment was not as complete as might be ideal, the reports from faculty and former students suggest that IIP graduates are competitive with respect to the job market. The former and current students interviewed expressed a great deal of satisfaction with their decision to pursue graduate education via the IIP route. With few exceptions, the students

were also clear with respect to the fact that, had IIP not existed, they would either have had to pursue their educational ambitions at a different university or "make do" with a less than satisfactory approach to their career goals. The students who were interviewed were articulate and mature spokespeople for IIP. To all appearances, they would have succeeded had they selected a more traditional route to graduate education.

In comparison to established programs, IIP challenges the student to actively engage in program design. While the IIP degree is actually conferred within the lead College of the student's program, the student plays a more active role in the selection of POS, faculty on the program committee, and presenting possible program outcomes than is often experienced in a traditional program of study. Prior to acceptance, the student must develop a proposal that not only articulates the objectives he/she wishes to pursue via graduate education but must also outline the curriculum that will accomplish those objectives. Through this process, a more informed assessment can be made concerning the appropriateness of the IIP approach to the accomplishment of the goals articulated by the student. However, faculty within the IIP program of study presented by a student are members of three different programs on campus, and this leads to less contact than is traditionally expected. The current 3.3 undergraduate GPA requirement for admission to the IIP Master's and 3.3 undergrad GPA and 3.6 Master's GPA requirements for admission to the IIP PhD is more than sufficient, and likely thwarts some sciences students from applying. Maintenance of this GPA is stipulated as a criterion for retention in the program. The admission or retention of certain students with less than the GPA is both troubling and unacceptable. The GPA criteria need to be enforced, if academic standards are going to be maintained by the IIP program. The IIP Director must address this problem directly by informing students under the GPA minimum that they have two quarters to correct the problem or will be discontinued from the program. The student applicant is expected to devise a statement of objectives and degree program, and identify the three departments participating in the individual degree, prior to the first meeting with a potential advisor and committee. It is clearly necessary to have some initial information in order to evaluate whether a student qualifies to participate in the program and whether their career goals are best met with an IIP degree, and to determine which departments would best suit the student's needs. Having the student produce a complete degree program without the advice of faculty appears completely backwards. In fact, nearly every graduating undergraduate student needs a substantial amount of interaction and counseling, and often research or internship experience, before he or she is capable of defining one particular area of interest to pursue for graduate studies.

Although the students were pleased to have participated in the IIP, all of them expressed concerns about the program's lack of integration into the graduate programs of the University more generally and less-than ideal direction and monitoring by the faculty who supervised their courses of study. Although a lead program is designated for each student, the lead program does not provide funding, office space, mailbox, participation in a listserv, or any other means of integrating students into the units represented by the areas combined to create the individualized programs. Some of the students also expressed frustration with difficulties gaining entrance to the classes they needed to complete their programs. The issues of ownership and integration are serious problems and would need to be corrected if the IIP is to continue.

Related to the lack of ownership is an apparent absence of full participation by the faculty committee in the direction of the student's program. Most students felt that their primary faculty advisor was involved, but at least one student indicated that even this level of guidance was absent. There was less agreement that the rest of the faculty committee contributed significantly to overseeing the student's plan of study. Several faculty members also were concerned that

committee involvement was not provided or was less than ideal. There was disagreement about whether the entire committee even met with the student when he or she was initially accepted into the program. This is a long-standing problem with the program. In the first review of the program between 1983 and 1986, information on programmatic weaknesses included the directive that more direction and monitoring of students were needed. It appears that nearly 20 years later this is still a problem. This difficulty in providing adequate student mentoring might be related to the program's previous leadership. The new program director, Interim Associate Provost for Graduate Studies, has only been in place slightly more than a year and the self-study he prepared fully acknowledges this problem and offers suggestions for improvement.

The apparent difficulty with faculty participation after the student is admitted may be exacerbated by the absence of faculty participation in developing the student's plan of study from the point of application. The graduate directors are simply asked to review and approve or modify the plan. Faculty "buy-in" may be improved if faculty members participate in the development of the application, write letters of recommendation for the student, and pledge their sponsorship of the student from the very beginning. Without faculty commitment, students are left to fend for themselves. Certainly self-directed graduate students are appreciated; however, the ability to attract faculty interest in one's work should not be the central criterion for student success in the program. Several faculty members when asked what they or the University would lose if the program were discontinued responded "nothing."

Some of the students noted that involving faculty might be difficult because faculty don't know much about the program or what is expected of students. This concern was also included in the review of the program in 1983-1986. The observation was made that there were no guidelines for minimum and maximum expectations in course work and research. This problem is a concern at any point, but even more so when it has been noted for nearly 20 years. More generally, both students and faculty observed that the program is not promoted and students are not actively recruited into it.

Students do not receive funding through the program. This has a number of negative consequences. First, only students who have other means of support can participate. All of the students interviewed were either University employees, full-time employees elsewhere, or supported by a fellowship in some other program. The number of students in the program is small and has apparently decreased over the years. It is hard to identify exactly why this trend has occurred; however, it is likely that funding has played a role. Second, without funding as a teaching or research assistant, students are denied access to professional development as a teacher or a researcher. Both skills are critical, at least among Ph.D. students, for high-level professional positions appropriate for doctoral recipients. Third, without the opportunity to participate in a faculty member's research program as a research assistant, it is less likely that the student will be able to publish. Indeed, none of the students who participated in the campus interview had publications. Student productivity data were not included in the self-study, so it is not clear if other students in the program have or have not published. Some had conference presentations, but here too, the lack of funding, in the form of travel support, prevented them from either presenting at all or presenting as often as they wanted to and were capable of doing. Fourth, time to degree is extended. Several students indicated that they did not take more than a course a quarter. When compared against standard criteria for quality doctoral programs (which include student publications, grants and awards, conference presentations, participation of students drawn from a national pool, full-time financial support, time to degree and student mentoring) the program does not appear to be meeting the needs of the students. Faculty criteria that are relevant to evaluating

programs are unknown. Summaries of the records of faculty who have directed the students' programs (or the records themselves) were not included in the self-study. Professional activities such as conferences, publications or performances, and grant-writing experience, are regarded as additional key components of a properly implemented advanced degree. Only one or two students indicated participation in these activities. While a number of students expressed the desire to attend conferences and workshops, most students expressed little or no interest in obtaining publication or performance experience, and no student interviewed mentioned grants. A major concern exists with respect to the format leading to the conferral of "Master's" and "PhD" degrees. It is troublesome that there is the general lack of interest on the part of the students to participate in most standard professional development activities. More disturbing is the absence of at least partial guaranteed support for conference participation and other essential professional activities, especially at the PhD level. There is no information available regarding the relative career success of IIP degree holders. It might be true that the majority get the academic or professional development they need for the career they are pursuing without needing access to these additional experiences. However, it is questionable whether this "minimalist" strategy, forced by fiscal circumstances or not, or related to disinterest on the part of the students or not, provides the students with an adequate degree experience. The lack of student interest (except for some students) in attending conferences might relate to inadequate mentoring by the lead advisor. This could be remedied by encouraging faculty to promote professional activities to the students and facilitate their participation. However, the second part to the problem appears to stem from the lack of financial commitment for professional activities at all levels for an entire advanced degree program. Intended or not, this conveys the undesirable image of short-shifting IIP students—not at all a satisfactory endorsement of an entire advanced degree-granting program by OU. The university must take steps to generate funding for the professional development of students admitted into IIP if it intends to continue the program. Maintaining an advanced degree program in name and process but leaving it without the fiscal means to fully implement its objectives is irrational.

Students heartily endorsed the open nature and inherent flexibility of the program, giving them and their advisory committee the ability to build a degree that best meets the individual needs of the student. The very capable and motivated students interviewed were competent subjects of the cross-departmental format. In some cases, students were pursuing degree programs that covered multiple disciplines at an expectedly less deep level than the standard single-department degree, but that would be appropriate for a Master's degree. Others have formulated programs that foster depth of thought and knowledge at the intersection of three traditionally separately maintained fields. The latter approach would lend itself to the design of a worthy PhD degree, if depth and intensive professional training are indeed retained in pursuit of the degree. Sacrificing depth and intensity for dabbling in a few different fields would run counter to the premise of a Ph.D. degree.

Certainly, a substantial level of flexibility needs to be retained in the program in order for it to continue as a non-traditional degree mechanism. However, a major concern is the absence of explicitly stated expectations for typical degree milestones. All social and physical science and some social science Master's and PhD degrees involve minimal requirements for foundational course work and production of a culminating experience such as a thesis or dissertation, performance or its equivalent. Some schools and departments do voluntarily enforce similar expectations on IIP students to produce a thesis/dissertation or similar capstone product that non-IIP students in the lead department adhere to. This is commendable. However, the absence of built-in expectations of key components commensurate with those of other post-baccalaureate degrees raises questions of academic rigor and development of critical thinking for individual IIP

degree programs. However, without explicit guidelines in a "modus," the degree framework remains the whim of the student and the advisory committee. The minimal levels of rigor, training and critical thinking that should accompany every advanced degree, however formulated, are contingent on the ingenuity, motivation and dedication of the student, the advisor and advisory committee, the lead department in some cases, or parts of all of these. It is not wholly convincing that the "format" of IIP programs learned of through interviews and documents actually meets the rigor and training demanded by single-department degree programs.

Graduate Executive Summary

EVALUATION OF Individual Interdisciplinary Program (IIP)

DATE November 2002

Commendations:

In its objective, the IIP is consistent with the recommended directions on collaborative, inter- or multi-disciplinary approaches to research and graduate training. The IIP has long incorporated ideals that only recently have been recognized as critical for the future of research and graduate education. The program provides training for students who do not see themselves as easily fitting into an existing program, either because multiple areas of study cannot be incorporated into the course work and research training of an individual department or because the student wants to acquire multiple credentials to support a particular career goal. The IIP also allows the university to provide master's or doctoral training in areas not currently offered as a program, especially to students who have no mobility and cannot seek the program elsewhere, and offers the university an opportunity to develop programs in response to repeated IIP student interest. In these ways, the IIP meets the university's mission of holding the intellectual and personal growth of the individual to be a central purpose.

Concerns:

The IIP does not adequately meet some of the objectives thought to be critical to a successful graduate degree program, and currently has almost no structure. The admission or retention of certain students with less than the required GPA is both troubling and unacceptable if academic standards are going to be maintained by the IIP. Although, a substantial level of flexibility needs to be retained in the program to be a non-traditional degree mechanism, the absence of built-in expectations for key components commensurate with those of other post-baccalaureate degrees raises questions of academic rigor and development of critical thinking for individual IIP degree programs. A major concern exists with respect to the format leading to the legitimate conferral of "Master's" and "PhD" degrees. A troubling issue is the general lack of interest on the part of the students with respect to participating in most standard professional development activities, especially at the PhD level. There is no information available regarding the relative career success of students who obtained an IIP degree. Although it might be true that the majority get the academic or professional development they need for the particular career they are aiming for without access to these additional experiences, this "minimalist" strategy is of concern as it provides the students' with an inadequate degree experience. If the IIP is considered to be integral to OU's mission, and unless OU will make a commitment to support and strengthen the IIP to meet its objectives most effectively within a reasonable period of time (e.g., two years), then this lack of commitment at various levels in the university can only be construed as a refusal to endorse the IIP as a university program.

Weaknesses:

The present organization lacks clear policies and procedures for the coordinator, faculty, and students involved in the IIP. More effort for contact with the student and program committee members must be made. Students should not be expected to negotiate all the difficult terrain of a dissertation with such limited contact. The student's full committee needs to operate more actively, not only in approving the student's program of study but in guiding the student with respect to the selection and execution of his/her capstone project. The student's primary advisor functions almost exclusively with respect to decision-making, and that the student's committee operates more to approve (i.e., rubber stamp) the advisor's recommendations.

March 8, 2006

David Ingram
Chair, University Curriculum Council
Campus

Dear David Ingram

At its November meeting Graduate Council approved the recommendation of our Curriculum Committee to accept the program review of the Individual Interdisciplinary Programs.

Michael Mumper, was present to represent these programs at our meeting.

Please find attached the summary report of Graduate Council's Curriculum Committee.

In a lengthy discussion Graduate Council expressed considerable concern that the doctoral component of this program supplied limited support for students enrolled in it. While some students enrolled in the program have produced work of very high quality much of the responsibility for the program falls on the student. There is also no funding to support it. In academic areas where a coherent field of study exists in other universities, but is not currently available at Ohio University, the program can work well.

Graduate Council agreed that, while they believe the IIP program makes an important contribution to graduate studies at Ohio University there is a need for a greater commitment by the university to this program. Clearer mechanisms for mentorship are needed together with a strategy for identifying precisely which college and/or school and department requirements a student must satisfy.

Sincerely,



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Academic Program Review: Individualized Interdisciplinary Program (IIP)

Strengths noted in the Program review:

In its objective, the IIP is consistent with the recommended directions on collaborative, inter- or multi-disciplinary approaches to research and graduate training. The IIP has long incorporated ideals that only recently have been recognized as critical for the future of research and graduate education. Additionally, the IIP allows Ohio University to provide master's or doctoral training in areas not currently offered as a program, especially to students who have no mobility and cannot seek the program elsewhere. It also offers the university an opportunity to develop programs in response to repeated IIP student interest. In these ways, the IIP meets the university's mission of holding the intellectual and personal growth of the individual to be a central purpose.

Concerns noted in the Program review:

The IIP does not adequately meet some of the objectives thought to be critical to a successful graduate degree program, and currently has almost no structure. The admission or retention of certain students with less than the required GPA is both troubling and unacceptable if academic standards are going to be maintained by the IIP. The absence of built-in expectations for key components commensurate with those of other post-baccalaureate degrees raises questions of academic rigor and development of critical thinking for individual IIP degree programs. A major concern exists with respect to the format leading to the legitimate conferral of "Master's" and "PhD" degrees. A troubling issue is the general lack of interest on the part of the students with respect to participating in most standard professional development activities, especially at the PhD level. If the IIP is considered to be integral to OU's mission, and unless OU will make a commitment to support and strengthen the IIP to meet its objectives most effectively within a reasonable period of time (e.g., two years), then this lack of commitment at various levels in the university can only be construed as a refusal to endorse the IIP as a university program.

Weaknesses:

The present organization lacks clear policies and procedures for the coordinator, faculty, and students involved in the IIP. More effort for contact with the student and program committee members must be made.

Recommendations of the Graduate Council Curriculum Committee: The Interim Associate Provost for Graduate Studies, Raymie McKerrow, agreed with the review and was taking steps to address the concerns and weaknesses. The committee recommends accepting the program review.

Individualized Interdisciplinary Program (IIP) External Reviewer's Report

Hilary H. Ratner, Associate Provost and Dean of the Graduate School
Wayne State University
Detroit, MI

Introduction

There is a rapidly growing emphasis on collaborative, inter-or multi-disciplinary approaches to research and graduate training. For example, when making awards, funding agencies, such as the National Institutes of Health, have moved toward a problem-focused approach that draws on solutions from multiple disciplines and multiple investigators. Similarly, research training for graduate students is closely following these trends. For example, the National Science Foundation in 1997 initiated the Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship (IGERT) program to create a cultural change in graduate education by establishing new models for training that transcends traditional disciplinary boundaries. This program is intended to better prepare students as problem-focused researchers, either within the academy or in industry, business or government, to develop interdisciplinary backgrounds and deep knowledge in chosen disciplines. Finally, the Re-envisioning the Ph.D. project funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts provides a number of recommendations for re-engineering doctoral education within the United States. Among the recommendations is the call for a balance between the deep learning of the disciplinary doctorate with interdisciplinary challenges. Specific suggestions include providing more opportunities for students to work across disciplinary lines and to continue development of inter-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary, and cross-disciplinary programs.

Although there seems to be convergence among researchers, educators, employers, and funding agents that interdisciplinary training is increasingly necessary for graduate students, there is not always agreement concerning how best to deliver this type of training. Should interdisciplinary training be fostered within interdisciplinary programs, provided by broader training within the disciplines, or some combination of the two? The ultimate challenge for Ohio University, as for any research extensive or intensive university, is deciding which approach best fosters the goal of interdisciplinary training for the greatest number of students. Moreover, when making any strategic decision, a related question is whether the benefits derived from resources expended to support a particular program exceed the benefits that might occur from re-investing elsewhere. It is with respect to these issues that I offer perspectives on the strengths and weaknesses of the program and possible courses of action that the University might undertake.

Strengths of the program

In its objective, the IIP is consistent with the recommended directions for graduate education as outlined above. It is impressive that the program, which began in 1978, has a long history and reflects an extended interest in interdisciplinary graduate training. The University can be proud that the IIP program has long incorporated ideals that only recently have been recognized as critical for the future of research and graduate education.

In addition, the program provides training for students who do not see themselves as easily fitting into an existing program, either because multiple areas of study cannot be incorporated into the course work and research training of an individual department or because the student wants to acquire multiple credentials to support a particular career goal (e.g., the medical student who wanted training in business and teaching to enhance his skills as a family medicine practitioner and academic). The IIP also allows the University to provide master's or doctoral training in areas not currently offered as a program, especially to students who have no mobility and cannot seek the program elsewhere, and offers the University an opportunity to develop programs in response to repeated IIP student interest. In these ways, the IIP meets the University's mission of holding the intellectual and personal growth of the individual to be a central purpose.

The review committee met with several master's and Ph.D. IIP students who were articulate, bright, and accomplished. Each student we spoke with was enthusiastic about the program and believed that his or her intellectual needs were met within the context of the IIP. Faculty members who had directed students in the program were pleased with the students they had worked with, although faculty who had themselves been students in the IIP were most enthusiastic.

Finally, the IIP has a new director, Associate Provost McKerrow, who clearly recognizes the strengths and weaknesses of the program, has already improved student mentoring, has good ideas about how to further improve the IIP, and is committed to making program changes, if consistent with the future directions chosen for the program.

Weaknesses of the program

Although the students were pleased to have participated in the IIP, all of them expressed concerns about the program's lack of integration into the graduate programs of the University more generally and less-than ideal direction and monitoring by the faculty who supervised their courses of study.

Many of the students used phrases such as "stepchild," "orphan," and "second-class" to describe how they believed the program is viewed by faculty, other students, and administrators. Although a lead program is designated for each student, the lead program does not provide funding, office space, participation in a listserv, or any other means of integrating students into the units represented by the areas combined to create the individualized programs. All but one of the students didn't even have a mailbox. Again and again in research on graduate education, student productivity and program completion are related to integration of students into their departments (e.g., Lovitts, 2001). Some of the students also expressed frustration with difficulties gaining entrance to the classes they needed to complete their programs. They were told that only after students "in the program" were served could the IIP students be enrolled. As one administrator noted, "no one wants to take responsibility. There is no ownership of this program." The issues of ownership and integration are serious problems and would need to be corrected if the IIP is to continue.

Related to this lack of ownership is an apparent absence of full participation by the faculty committee in the direction of the student's program. Most students felt that their primary faculty advisor was involved, but at least one student indicated that even this level of guidance was absent. There was less agreement that the rest of the faculty committee contributed significantly to overseeing the student's plan of study. Several

faculty members also were concerned that committee involvement was not provided or less than ideal. There was disagreement about whether the entire committee even met with the student when he or she was initially accepted into the program. Some said this did occur and others said it did not. This is a long-standing problem with the program. In the first review of the program between 1983 and 1986, information on programmatic weaknesses included the directive that more direction and monitoring of students were needed. It appears that nearly 20 years later this is still a problem. This difficulty in providing adequate student mentoring might be related to the program's previous leadership. The new program director, Associate Provost McKerrow, has only been in place slightly more than a year and the self-study he prepared fully acknowledges this problem and offers suggestions for improvement.

This apparent difficulty with faculty participation after the student is admitted may be exacerbated by the absence of faculty participation in developing the student's plan of study from the point of application. One graduate director noted that "one day in campus mail a program of study arrives." The director is simply asked to review and approve or modify the plan. Faculty "buy-in" may be improved if faculty members participate in the development of the application, write letters of recommendation for the student, and pledge their sponsorship of the student from the very beginning. Without faculty commitment, students are left to fend for themselves. One former student remarked: "You need to line up and lobby faculty who believe in you as a person. The program is not for the faint-hearted or those who need structure." Certainly all of us appreciate self-directed graduate students; however, the ability to attract faculty interest in one's work should not be the central criterion for student success in the program. Several faculty members responded when asked what they or the University would lose if the program were discontinued said, "nothing." (Please note, however, that when others were asked the same question they responded that talented, creative students would not be served and that the University would lose an opportunity to benefit from their innovative work.)

Some of the students noted that involving faculty may be difficult because faculty don't know much about the program or what is expected of students. This concern was also included in the review of the program in 1983-1986. The observation was made that there were no guidelines for minimum and maximum expectations in course work and research. This problem is a concern at any point, but even more so when it has been noted for nearly 20 years. More generally, both students and faculty observed that the program is not promoted and students are not actively recruited into it.

As mentioned earlier, students do not receive funding through the program. This has a number of negative consequences. First, only students who have other means of support can participate. All of the students we talked with were either University employees, full-time employees elsewhere, or supported by a fellowship in some other program. The number of students in the program is small and has apparently decreased over the years. It is hard to identify exactly why this trend has occurred; however, it is likely that funding has played a role. Second, without funding as a teaching or research assistant, students are denied access to professional development as a teacher or a researcher. Both skills are critical, at least among Ph.D. students, for high-level professional positions appropriate for doctoral recipients. Third, without the opportunity to participate in a faculty member's research program as a research assistant, it is less likely that the student will be able to publish. Indeed, none of the students we talked with had publications. Student productivity data were not included in the self-study, so it is not clear if other students in the program have or have not published. Some had

conference presentations, but here too, the lack of funding, in the form of travel support, prevented them from either presenting at all or presenting as often as they wanted to and were capable of doing. One student specifically said that she stopped attending conferences because she simply couldn't afford it. Fourth, time to degree is extended. Several students indicated that they did not take more than a course a quarter.

Thus, when compared against standard criteria for quality doctoral programs (which include student publications, grants and awards, conference presentations, participation of students drawn from a national pool, full-time financial support, time to degree and student mentoring) the program does not appear to be meeting the needs of the students. Faculty criteria that are relevant to evaluating programs are unknown. Summaries of the records of faculty who have directed the students' programs (or the records themselves) were not included in the self-study.

Possible Courses of Action

There are at least four possible directions, offered in no particular order, that the University could choose for the IIP: (1) strengthen the program, (2) eliminate the doctoral component of the program, but retain the master's program, (3) eliminate both components of the program, or (4) allow the program to continue as it is.

(1) Strengthen the program

Ideally, if the program is going to continue, especially at the level of the Ph.D., steps must be taken to improve faculty and department "ownership" of the IIP, student mentoring, funding, and recruitment. The following are some suggestions for strengthening these areas:

- (a) Faculty who will be working with the student (or at least a subset of the eventual committee) should be involved in designing the student's program before a final application is submitted. Faculty who are potential mentors could be identified on a website describing the program, with contact information available, in order to facilitate student communication with faculty. Faculty would work with the student to develop the plan of study, identify the general area of dissertation research, and generate professional objectives. Faculty would also be required to provide a letter of recommendation. From the information in the self-study faculty involvement sometimes occurs at this point, but not always or perhaps even often. Faculty involvement and commitment might be improved if engagement always begins at the outset of the student's work. Creating structure at the beginning of the student's program is also important because the student is not a part of an established program with clear cultural norms, socialization practices, and expectations that will facilitate student development. Initial structure might help the student by clarifying goals and objectives and allow the student to demonstrate whether he or she is likely to be successful in a more ambiguous interdisciplinary context.
- (b) Given that there seemed to be questions concerning expectations of students in the program, a committee might be formed to develop specific guidelines for IIP plans of study, professional objectives, milestones, and time lines that faculty and students could use to help them develop the individualized programs.

- (c) The faculty committee, along with the IIP director, should meet together with the student after the student is admitted. A review of the student's progress should be developed and discussed at an annual meeting thereafter with the student's committee and the IIP director. Goals for the next year should be identified and agreed upon, along with the progress review, and both should be given to the student in writing, and copied to the student's file in the IIP office. Problems should be discussed and resolved. Of course, more frequent meetings should be encouraged; however, an annual meeting among committee members and the IIP director would be a minimum expectation. Before the final project is submitted to the appropriate college for review, the IIP director should also provide approval.
- (d) IIP students should be considered as a student in the lead program and count in the total number of students admitted and funded in the particular program. In other words, if a particular department typically admits 5 new students and it agrees to serve as a lead program for an IIP student, then it would only admit 4 more students. The IIP student would compete for funding in the same way as the other students in the program and have all other privileges of department membership afforded to him or her (e.g., office space, mailbox, e-mail account, travel money, dissertation support etc.). Students might also be asked to submit GRE scores and GPA/TOEFL requirements might be increased so that their competitiveness for a funded place could be evaluated in relation to other students in the lead program. If departments are not willing to make this commitment to IIP students, then the Provost's Office needs to identify resources that can be provided to IIP students.
- (e) Once the program is strengthened, recruitment efforts, either by a central administrative office or the lead programs, should be initiated. Funds for recruitment should be made available by the colleges and the Provost's Office.

(2) Eliminate the doctoral component of the program, but retain the master's program

The decision may be made that additional resources are not available for strengthening the Ph.D. component of the IIP. Even current resources dedicated to the program might be better invested elsewhere. Few students are being served by the program, it is a weak program and substantial resources would be required to improve it, and there may be better ways to achieve the goal of providing interdisciplinary Ph.D. training to doctoral students than the IIP. **Indeed, if the decision were made to discontinue the Ph.D. IIP, interdisciplinary approaches to doctoral training need to be expanded to meet the needs of doctoral students in the twenty-first century.** This expansion may be required even if the doctoral IIP were retained.

With respect to present resources, the director of the IIP already dedicates at least a full day every one to two weeks to the IIP and if the program were strengthened even more time would be required. Additional faculty time would also be needed, along with financial resources. The following question needs to be asked: What other initiatives could be developed using the time and funds saved if the doctoral IIP were discontinued? For instance, programs for professional development of Graduate Teaching Assistants might be considerably expanded, providing necessary training for future doctoral-level professionals and improving delivery of instruction to the

undergraduates they teach. Many more students would be reached by such an initiative than the number currently served in the IIP. There are undoubtedly many other initiatives that could be supported and University administrators will need to decide priorities for the institution.

Although mentoring would still need to be strengthened for master's students, these students expressed fewer concerns about the program than Ph.D. students. In addition, enrollment in the master's program and the number of awarded degrees are higher in the master's program than for the Ph.D. component of the IIP, suggesting that the master's program is more successful in meeting the needs of students. Finally, issues related to funding and student publication are less critical for master's than doctoral programs. Research training is certainly a critical part of master's education; however, professional training is often the primary (although certainly not only) educational objective.

(3) Eliminate both components of the program

Although the master's component of the IIP may be more successful, it will still require additional resources. Again, the decision may be made that these resources would be better directed to some other program or initiative.

(4) Allow the program to continue as it is

The decision may be made that the IIP is achieving the goal of providing interdisciplinary training to the students who desire it and that the resources dedicated to it are appropriate to meet this goal. If this decision is made, however, the University needs to acknowledge that the program will continue to be weak, especially at the doctoral level.

Rating Sheet for Unit Review Committee

EVALUATION OF Individual Interdisciplinary Program
 (name of department, program, certificate, institute, etc.)

DATE 11-11-02

PROGRAM REVIEW	
<input type="checkbox"/> undergraduate certificate	<input type="checkbox"/> bachelor's degree
<input type="checkbox"/> graduate certificate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> graduate degree
<input type="checkbox"/> associate degree	(<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MA, <input type="checkbox"/> MS, and/or <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PhD)

Program Review Elements in Relation to The Goals of The Unit	Exceeds Expectation	Meets Expectation	Fails to Meet Expectation
General Department Information			
Faculty Profile			
Programmatic Practices			
Adequacy of Resources			
Undergraduate Program Review			
Program Goals and Curriculum			
Faculty			
Students			
Graduates			
Graduate Program Review			
Program Goals and Curriculum			X
Faculty--- Information not available			
Students		X	
Graduates --- Information not available			
Overall Evaluation			
			X



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To: Prof. Mehmet Celenk, Chair, IIP Review Committee
From: Raymie E. McKerrow, Interim Associate Provost for Graduate Studies *RM*
Re: IIP Review

I am responding to the Committee's review of the IIP program. I appreciate the Committee's serious consideration of the issues raised in the Self-Study. As the third director of the Interdisciplinary Individualized Program in the current review period, I am aware of the issues raised by the review. My intent in this response is that these comments serve as guidelines for considering future changes.

There is only one small correction to the current review: the requirement to submit GRE/GMAT test scores is not restricted to the "lead" department. In practice, the student is asked to comply with the admission requirements of each program. Beyond this one issue, the review accurately captures the past and present status of the program.

I agree with the review's concern with respect to admission of student's with less than the requisite grade point average; I will review the current GPA's of all enrolled students, and will take appropriate action with respect to making sure all students are making satisfactory progress with respect to graduation requirements. With respect to future admissions, I will be taking a more proactive approach in evaluating the student's initial qualifications. While exceptions to minimum standards are possible, the problem in the past is that such waivers, especially at the master's level, have been well below an acceptable norm. In the future, serious inquiries will be shared in advance with respective graduate directors and associate deans, including information relative to GPA and academic background. Their response will be the key factor in any decision to move forward. This strategy should help avoid future 'low GPA admission' issues.

The integration of students into programs is rightly recognized as a continuing problem. As in the case of part-time graduate students, and others who are not funded as assistants, the IIP students can feel "left out" of departmental events and support. IIP students may not be seen as "belonging" to any one program, especially when a student seeks support to attend a conference. As one remedy, I have made travel funds available to IIP students who have presented at conferences. This support is not contingent on support from a

department or college, though I have worked with programs to see if additional support can be made available to IIP students. This fund needs to be formalized, with information made more readily available to all IIP students. The presence of the fund may also assist in increasing the research profile of students involved in the program, as they will know some support will be available for conference presentations.

The issue concerning faculty participation in a student's program is an important one. I have been more active on some student's committees, in terms of meeting with the student to see how their program is going. Given the current size of the program, it may be useful to monitor progress on a more systematic basis—this may assist in locating problems and seeking remedies before they become major concerns. Increasing attention by faculty to a student's initial application, as recommended in the report, is another strategy that should increase faculty involvement over time.

Student funding is a major drawback to both the research productivity of student's (partly responded to above) as well as to program size. In the past, as near as I can discern from the records, students who were not already funded, or supported via OU employment, were granted tuition waivers. I suspect that stopped as we changed fee waiver practices, and initiated the OGS stipend/scholarship as the replacement. While it is still possible for programs to fund an IIP student, and at least one master's student is on such funding now, that is less likely given the option of funding a student whose major will be in the program providing the funds. It would be appropriate for the Graduate Council to consider this issue when they consider the report; it would be helpful to have their support in seeking funding for those students who otherwise might not enter the program. If it were possible for Graduate Studies to provide the funding, the work commitment could be tied to a faculty member's research within one of the student's programs.

Once the review process is completed, it would be appropriate to convene an ad hoc group of faculty who have been involved with the program. Their charge would be to consider the recommendations approved by the Graduate Council and UCC, especially as these relate to program expectations, and to provide the director with advice on how best to improve the program. It may be useful for such a group to meet at least twice a year to review admissions, interview students in the program, and serve as an informal advisory committee to the director.

In closing, I want to reiterate my thanks to the review team for their participation in this process. In writing the self-study, I raised several questions about the program, and the review has been responsive to my initial concerns. Hopefully, this response will assist in moving the discussion forward, and result in a stronger program.