

**Committee for Coordinators of Interdisciplinary Programs
Rowan University
2003 Report
Executive Summary**

The coordinators for Interdisciplinary Programs (ID) were called together by Dean Jay Harper, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) and met in October 2001, February 2002 and October 2002. We discussed many of the problems faced by coordinators trying to run successful ID programs that serve Rowan University students, these include:

- coordinators need to receive notices that go to all department chairs and adding ID coordinators to chairs meetings
- with the exception of Rowan Seminar and Honors, courses are not easily identifiable by students or faculty as being part of an ID program
- coordinators have little or no control over who teaches ID courses
- information about ID concentrations is very difficult to find in university publications like the catalog and on the web site
- students who complete an ID programs receive little recognition
- the need for a working system to assure that the ID students get into the ID classes
- the need for advertising ID opportunities
- there are no lists of students taking ID concentrations
- the limited concept and understanding of ID programs across the university
- bringing ID programs to the attention of the Dean's Council
- the need for a physical home for ID programs with dedicated staff so these programs have a central not marginalized status
- faculty are not encouraged to teach in ID programs because of continuing demands in home departments to serve both majors and general education students
- the ID majors (Liberal Studies) have no physical location or personnel to support the needs of their students, the coordinators of these majors have to serve Liberal Studies majors in their home departments in addition to the regular department duties
- the need for an administrative structure that would bring all ID programs into one home and be recognized as an integral part of the university community and significant contributors to the university mission.

The committee discussed many of these problems and offered a variety of suggestions to address some of these, suggestions included:

- reorganizing information about ID programs
- making this information more readily accessible
- better dissemination of information
- increased advertising
- certificates for students who complete ID concentrations
- web pages for each ID program linked to a single ID home page linked directly to the RU home page.

Acting on the above suggestions we:

- produced the ID brochure that includes information about African American Studies, Asian Studies, Environmental Studies, International Studies, Women's Studies, Honors, Rowan Seminar and Study Abroad
- distributed this brochure at events sponsored by ID programs
- provided this brochure with orientation information distributed to freshmen and transfer students
- developed an ID program guide published it in the Rowan University Catalog, now appearing early in the document
- hosted an ID information day for the University community at the Student Center on February 5, 2002
- designed, awarded and distributed certificates to graduates who have completed an ID programs for the last two years

Recommendation

The value of interdisciplinary experiences for undergraduates cannot be overstated. These efforts are central to meeting the Rowan University mission of “providing an exceptional environment for achievement and fulfillment in a dynamic society through rigorous intellectual effort and vigorous personal interactions among all members of its diverse learning community.” It is essential that the ID programs be brought under one administrative umbrella that has a structure that is outside a specific college. To house the ID programs in one college limits the definition of interdisciplinary to disciplines within a single college. What we seek are cross-college interactions, which provide diverse perspectives and approaches to develop offerings for all our students to prepare them for the diverse world they will enter when they graduate. These cross-college interactions will be better served if there is a central administrative structure for all ID programs, with the necessary resources to bring the programs from their marginalized status to the forefront of the university. We envision this new structure as vital to allow Rowan University to achieve the next level of excellence described in our strategic plan.

Should we need more evidence of the importance of organizing ID program we need only to look to teacher preparation. The New Jersey Department of Education is introducing a new license for teachers called Elementary School with Subject Matter certification, within this certification there will be 5 specializations all of which will require the College of Education to offer ID coordinate majors in place to address the new specializations. This new code will go into effect in January 2004. The need for ID programs and majors is becoming even more important.

It has been nationally recognized (www.pkal.org) that the existence of a “home” for ID programs brings more visibility and recognition. Having a “home” increases student attraction and student retention to ID programs. The Committee of ID Coordinators strongly recommends that a task force be formed which will study the current ID situation, investigate a new structure that will allow a unified, comprehensive approach to ID programs, and make its recommendations to the university community. An ID

component that is central to the Rowan University experience will help establish Rowan University as a premiere institution of higher education and offer our students exceptional opportunities. These types of experiences will open minds, broaden horizons, and elevate the undergraduate experience for our students.

Addendum
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Highlights from ID Programs

Here we share highlights from several of the ID programs to show the breadth of the ID experiences available at Rowan University. The year-end reports for each program are provided in the appendix.

There have been many accomplishments by the individual ID programs. Women's Studies hosted a leadership workshop for 8th grade girls, the program of 14 events presented during Women's History Month, commemorated the 30-year history of Women's Studies at Rowan University, and brought two outstanding speakers to campus, Dr. Claire Moses, Professor and chair of Women's Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park and Ms. Miranda Massie, Esq., lead counsel for the student intervenors of *Grutter v. Bollinger*, the nationally prominent University of Michigan affirmative action case.

The International Studies program offered a special topics course on German Civilization and Culture, which included a 10-day visit to the University of Osnabrück. In addition International Studies hosted Dr. Stephen Kotkin of Princeton University and Dr. Laszlo Molnar, Hungarian Ambassador to the United Nations, a lecture series and international film series. In the year-end report Dr. Edward Smith offers a recommendation for restructuring the International programs at Rowan University:

“As its primary recommendation, the Task Force recommends the creation of a new structure for International initiatives at Rowan. To better coordinate and manage International Initiatives for both students and faculty at Rowan University, we recommend the establishment of a new Center For International Affairs. This center will direct all aspects of International study and activity for both faculty and native Rowan students as well as for International Students and Scholars coming to our campus. The Center will be a focal point for all international initiatives and will establish policies and procedures with the goal of fostering a quality academic experience for all concerned. We are proposing a separation of the international and multicultural areas that are currently served by the Office of International Student Services and Multicultural Affairs, and a restructuring of the mission, staffing, and line of reporting of that office. We are also proposing that International Studies and Study Abroad be placed under a half-time faculty member working through the Center. In addition, we recommend that more physical space be devoted to the proposed Center, including room for a resource library and computer stations for student access, so that the Center can accomplish its goals.”

The Asian Studies Concentration has designed and posted a large poster to advertise the program, established a bulletin board for sharing information and distributed materials to all freshmen students during orientation. There have been several new courses developed include a team taught interdisciplinary course funded by the Rowan Interdisciplinary

Seminar Project funded by the Bildner Foundation and administered through Rowan Seminar. The Asian Studies program also organized several lectures on campus presented by members of the Rowan University community on topics ranging from law enforcement to literature. The program continued to make significant contributions to Asian-Pacific Cultural Heritage Month.

Rowan Seminar continued to offer content courses directed at helping first year students make the successful transition to university life. This program crosses all the college boundaries offering Rowan Seminar course in every college. In addition Rowan Seminar just completed the first year of the funded by the Bildner New Jersey Diversity Initiative. This grant funds the development of new team taught interdisciplinary courses that address issues of diversity and democracy for first year students at the same time addressing the goals of Rowan Seminar. The first two Bildner interdisciplinary team-taught courses will be offered in Fall 2003.

The African American Studies program had made exceptional progress toward the development of the Undergraduate Major in Africana Studies. A number of different faculty, from Education, Liberal Arts and Sciences and Fine and Performing Arts, have been involved in developing the core requirements and new courses for the major. The steering committee established a fund through the Rowan University Foundation and has been successful in gathering financial support.

The Environmental Studies program has been working with the Recruitment Office to make the program know to students before it becomes available as a major for the first time in Fall 2004.

The Honors Program offers extraordinary opportunities for a select cohort of our students. The annual report for Honors highlights the accomplishments of the program and the extraordinary efforts of the Honors students. The report very clearly states the long-term goal of establishing a College of Honors and Interdisciplinary Studies, with its own faculty lines and mechanism to assure funding for team taught courses. Honors course offerings are extensive and exceptional; such opportunities should be available to every student on campus; we need to seek ways to make this possible.

This small sampling shows the extraordinary efforts taking place on our campus to provide students with exceptional educational experiences that extend beyond normal disciplinary boundaries. It is time to bring these efforts into an organizational structure that will make it possible to offer such outstanding opportunities to all Rowan University students.