

## **Report of the Senate Taskforce on IDPs May 30, 2007**

This taskforce is at least the fourth in a long line of similar groups (going back literally 30 years) trying to grapple with issues faced by Interdepartmental Degree Programs (IDPs). We have documents from 1977, 1985, 1988, 1990, 1994, and most crucially 1997. Many of the problems remain unchanged. The last taskforce (1997), however, made some crucial suggestions that will enable us to make some new recommendations. Many good suggestions were made over this extended time period (and apparently formally enacted by EVCs) but lost within a few years. We did not want simply to reiterate those problems and offer similar solutions that don't seem to remedy them. We would like to suggest a new model regarding interdisciplinary work in a more general sense. We hope this shift in paradigm will both help solve some of the decades old issues faced by IDPs and will help the university move toward actually facilitating interdisciplinary work. At UCLA, we have always supported such work with our words, but often our structures work against it. We'd like to make our structure match our rhetoric.

In order to get to the outline of the problems and our suggested solutions efficiently, I will describe in an appendix the various procedures we followed to arrive at our conclusions. But we would like to proceed immediately to the heart of the issue.

Before we do so, we must point out that there are significant differences between the IDPs on North and South campus. The sciences seem to be in a mode in which the research of faculty members is overlapping and interweaving in very compelling ways. This has also created new teaching needs that have helped to drive the formation and running of IDPs. The additional staff and student support provided by grants of various kinds on south campus also helps to alleviate some of the perennial problems faced by north campus IDPs. But most IDPs share to some extent the problems we will sketch here.

### **The problems:**

Before getting in to the more general problems, we would like to suggest a clarification of the appointment process for IDP faculty and chairs. Confusion has arisen over the years because the undergraduate council did not exist when IDPs began to be appointed. FECs (particularly the college FEC) therefore took on the job of appointing undergraduate IDP faculty members. This poses difficulties if you have IDPs that run beyond the boundaries of the college. Now that the Undergraduate Council exists in parallel to Graduate Council (since both oversee the whole university rather than a single school) the appointment procedure should be revised. Also many years ago, two IDP committees were actually appointed--a committee to oversee the program (which had fiscal responsibility) and the actual folks who taught. (While these were often the same, they were not always so. I got two letters as Chair of an IDP—one giving me fiscal responsibility and one making me chair of the teaching program.) The difficulty then, is that **multiple entities currently appoint the IDP faculty committees and chairs.**

Graduate degree-granting IDP faculty are appointed by Graduate Council which currently delegates some of this responsibility to the Dean of Graduate Division

who consults with the faculty involved and the relevant deans and who also suggests to the chancellor who should be chair. The chancellor then formally appoints the chair (as he does for departments).<sup>1</sup>

Undergraduate degree-granting IDPs are currently appointed by the FECs (primarily the college FEC).

**The undergraduate degree-granting IDP faculty appointments should be made parallel to the graduate council appointment process. Undergraduate Council should appoint the IDP faculty and may want to delegate some of this responsibility to the Vice Provost for undergraduate education who is the parallel administrator to the Dean of the Graduate Division in that s/he oversees the entire campus in terms of undergraduate education. The Vice-Provost for undergraduate education will also suggest to the chancellor who should chair the IDP; the chancellor will then formally appoint.**

**If an IDP gives both undergraduate and graduate degrees, the Undergraduate Council and the Graduate Council should consult with one another to appoint a single committee that oversees both sets of degrees (as the faculty of a department do). The Dean of the Graduate Division and the Vice-Provost for Undergraduate Education should consult to propose a chair to be formally appointed by the Chancellor.**

**Both the faculty and the chair of IDPs should be appointed for multiple years (we would suggest 4-6 for faculty and 3-5 for chairs) rather than on a yearly basis. This would increase stability and the ability to plan the intellectual program of the IDP.<sup>2</sup>**

Now, to return to other shared IDP Problems:

1. **Lack of support funds** —(including financial support and a course-release for chairs who face heavy negotiating burdens to supply courses and secure faculty members each year; and lack of staff support and student counselors)
2. **Lack of stable faculty** (faculty migrate or feel threatened or undervalued in personnel actions by serving in an IDP)
3. **Lack of ability to secure and plan teaching even one year in advance.**
4. **Lack of ability to do long-range plans for the intellectual development of the IDP because there are often no faculty lines securely in the IDP**

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<sup>1</sup> In a letter of Oct. 14, 1985, EVC William D. Schaefer formalized this: “First, all IDPs will be guaranteed a basic level of support. Augmentations above this base will be provided in accordance with the size and nature of the programs. Second, in recognition of the fact that these programs will all have resources, the chairs and advisory committees will be appointed by the Chancellor in the same way that department chairs...are appointed.” We note that not all IDPs currently have a base level of support.

<sup>2</sup> The April 29, 1988 letter and attached report from Carol P. Hartzog already suggests chairs “normally serve a three- to five-year term” (p. 3 of the report itself).

5. **The course buy-out model makes IDPs too expensive**—and it is a bad model in which the university pays itself twice for the same faculty member’s time. We ask that a study be done by the administration to see just how much money this involves. It is possible that we could better use these funds for ladder faculty or TAs or grad student support.
6. **Lines of administrative authority are often confusing** (which dean is in charge if the IDP includes faculty from several divisions or from two or three different schools)
7. **Lack of space for IDP faculty and students to interact**

### Suggested Solutions:

1, 2, 3, & 4 all tie to the same issue. Lack of a stable pool of faculty members who contribute courses to the IDP. Many sign on but few actually teach and mentor.

To address all 4 of these, the university must **return at least partially to the idea that support funds follow faculty FTE not just departmental structures. Ask faculty members either to move part of their FTE to the IDP—and therefore to guarantee a certain amount of teaching and support funds--or ask faculty members to make a teaching commitment of 4 or 6 years (the theoretical life-span of an undergraduate or graduate student) to the IDP (e.g. teaching one course in each of those years for the IDP).**<sup>3</sup> We would further suggest that entire FTE be allowed to be appointed to IDPs. (If there are concerns that the IDP might disappear stranding the faculty member [which is not a fear we share], a 0% FTE could also be made with a department.)

**If at least 2.0 FTE for an undergraduate degree only program or 2.5 FTE for IDPs that give undergraduate and graduate degrees (in any combination –2.0 could be 4 people each at 50%, or 8 at 25% etc.) worth of faculty are not willing to do this, we should examine whether there is sufficient commitment to the IDP to continue it. UCLA should not be offering degrees at any level in which no ladder faculty teach or plan the degree.**

If this long-range transfer of FTE or long-range teaching commitment could be accomplished, support funds would follow and teaching could be planned for multiple years with some courses dedicated to the degrees offered by the IDP. The IDPs would then also be in a better position to plan for the sabbaticals of its members.

The actual transfer of partial (or whole) FTE to the IDPs would mean that the chairs would need to do more personnel work in preparing personnel files. But they would have to do less begging for courses and for faculty mentors. In any case, the chair

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<sup>3</sup> This actual transfer of partial FTE to an IDP was made possible by recommendations from the 1997 IDP taskforce chaired by Claudia Mitchell-Kernan and formalized in a memo by then Interim EVC Norm Abrams of May 7, 1998.

of an IDP should be paid at the same rate as a chair of a department of similar size in that division or school. The chair should not be paid less than the base pay for a department chair even if the IDP is small since much more planning and coordination must be done by an IDP chair out of his/her own time. A minimum of one course release (or buy-out from the home department) should also be provided for chairs.

IDP should also have access to some staff advisors for students—if the IDPs are small, they might participate in an advising pool.

#### **Problem 5—course buy-outs**

Rather than continue a course-for-course buy-out model, UCLA should establish a broader principle across the university to encourage interdisciplinary work more generally. To develop a sense of participation in the university's overall mission and to contribute to the increasing interdepartmental and interdisciplinary work on campus, **Departments should contribute at least 10% of their teaching effort to instruction outside of the department.**<sup>4</sup> (Some of these could be cross-listings—or might include honors courses, clusters, team-teaching with colleagues from other departments, etc.). Not every faculty member will want to do this, but those who do not can then appreciate those who do and who therefore help to fulfill this university contribution for their department.

**If some departments make extraordinary contributions in this way (beyond the expected 10% of their teaching effort), they should be able to ask for some rewards for doing so** (not a course by course buyout, but perhaps TAs, ladder FTE or other resources). To handle such a model, we would need oversight beyond the divisional or school deans. Some of the funds saved in course buy-outs could be put into a pool of resources available to those units making extraordinary contributions to interdisciplinary teaching. These funds should be controlled at a level high enough that anyone in the university could apply for them. Only a few administrative positions overlook the entire university: the EVC, Dean of the Grad Division & the Vice Provost for undergrad education. (The VC of research also does so, but he is involved in the research rather than teaching effort, and the VC of personnel does not handle resources of this kind.)

We recommend, therefore, that **this control of additional reward resources be overseen jointly by the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and the Dean of the Graduate Division.** This is also appropriate since they are also the ones who, in consultation with the faculty and relevant deans, oversee the faculty appointment to IDPs. This model would provide coherent oversight of IDPs without adding any additional administrators or bureaucracy to our system. It would also help ensure that a specific administrative pair would be thinking of those units that span divisions or schools so that these units do not continue to fall between the administrative cracks. **(This helps to alleviate the problems raised as number 6 above.)**

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<sup>4</sup> By teaching effort, we mean that if a department has 20 faculty who each teach 4 courses per year, their teaching effort would be 80 courses of which 8 should contribute to work beyond the departmental boundaries. We suspect that many departments already easily meet the 10% suggestion. But this specific percentage is an estimate on our part and might need to be reassessed in the future.

This duo of the Vice-Provost for Undergraduate Education and the Dean of the Graduate Division could also hold some temporary FTE (probably regained from greatly reducing course buy-outs) that might be needed to replace a key faculty member in an IDP who has a sabbatical or grant coming up or to provide a course release for IDP chairs when necessary.

**Course buy-outs or course releases should be reserved for those situations in which we are actually pulling a faculty member out of teaching to do an administrative task. The one place IDPs could use a course buy-out would be to secure one course released from teaching for the Chair of the IDP.**

This new model (of transferring partial FTE or making a firm teaching commitment coupled with the 10% contribution to courses outside the department) would underline the benefits of interdepartmental and interdisciplinary work and make participating in it a perk rather than a pain to the departments. This model would also help stabilize funding and teaching assignments for IDPs. It would admittedly undermine the old resource-centered-management mentality that swept the university a dozen years ago and pitted units against one another in terms of charging for everything. As a university focused on creating and sharing new knowledge, we are a cooperative intellectual endeavor, these recommendations would help us behave like one.

As to the problem of space (number 7 above), we believe IDPs should be provided at least a gathering room for students and faculty where meetings and seminars could take place and mail boxes could put. We realize that space is a tremendous problem across campus, and we have no specific solution to suggest here.

### **Conclusion:**

We believe it is time for UCLA to rethink its attitude toward IDPs in order to make them the arena where new areas might be born and grow and where ideas, teaching, and research not bounded by departmental structures might be nurtured. We hope the suggestions made here will help us to move more enthusiastically to a paradigm in which we have a responsibility to the university and the intellectual community at large rather than simply to our own departments or schools. The collective genius on this campus should be not just allowed but encouraged to interact and to provide new teaching and learning opportunities for faculty and students.

Respectfully submitted by:

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**Appendix I:**

## **UCLA Interdepartmental Degree Programs (31 programs offering 41 degrees)**

<b>IDP Name</b>	<b>Chair Name</b>	<b>Degrees Offered</b>
African Studies	Professor Andrew Apter	MA
Afro-American Studies	Professor Brenda Stevenson	BA, MA
American Indian Studies	Professor Felicia Hodge	BA, MA
Archaeology	Professor Richard Lesure	MA, PhD
Biomedical Engineering	Professor Tim Deming	MS, PhD
Biomedical Physics	Professor Michael McNitt-Gray	MS, PhD
Chemistry/Materials Science	Professor Sarah Tolbert	BA
Computational and Systems Biology	Professor Joseph DiStefano	BA
East Asian Studies	Professor David Schaberg	BA, MA
Environmental Sci & Eng	Professor Richard Ambrose	D.Env.
European Studies	Professor Kathleen Bawn	BA
Global Studies	Professor Nicholas Entrikin	BA
History/Art History	Professor Irene Bierman	BA
Indo-European Studies	Professor Stephanie Jamison	PhD
International Development Studies	Professor Michael Ross	BA
Islamic Studies	Professor Michael Morony	MA, PhD
Latin American Studies	Professor Kevin Terraciano	BA, MA
Mathematics/Atmospheric Sci	Professor Robert Fovell	BA
Mathematics/Economics	Professor Don Blasius	BA
Middle Eastern and North African Studies	Professor Claudia Rapp	BA
Molecular Biology	Professor Sabeeha Merchant	PhD
Molecular, Cellular, & Integrative Physiology	Professor James Tidball	PhD
Molecular Toxicology	Professor Oliver Hankinson	PhD
Moving Image Archive Studies	Professor Leah Lievrouw	MA
Neuroscience	Professor Scott Chandler	BA
Neuroscience	Professor Michael Levine	PhD

Romance Linguistics and Literature	Professor Massimo Ciavolella	MA, PhD
Southeast Asian Studies	Professor George Dutton	BA
Study of Religion	Professor S. Scott Bartchy	BA
UCLA/Getty Conservation Program	Professor David Scott	MA
Women's Studies	Professor Christine Littleton	BA, MA

## **Appendix II:**

### **Process by which the IDP arrived at its conclusions:**

The taskforce began its work by examining the reports of all the previous IDP taskforces that we could locate (back to 1977). We also read through the 8-year reviews of all IDPs for the last 8 years. Further we conducted a survey of IDP chairs and of Deans under whom IDPs operate to inquire as to problems and advantages of IDPs. (We also had five current or former IDP chairs on the committee—some of whom had also served as reviewers on IDP reviews.)

We found problems repeatedly recognized over a 35 year period and similar suggestions made. Many of these were good ones—but seem to have been lost within a few years as university structures, administrators and chairs changed and institutional memory faded.

We noted at the outset of our discussions that there is a great variation in the health of IDPs and the attitudes toward them across campus. (This was also reflected in the survey responses). In those south campus areas where faculty research is currently converging (particularly the life sciences), IDPs tend to be healthier and seen by everyone as more self-evident. At the beginning of our discussions, one person quoted a colleague as saying “why do we have IDPs?” Colleagues from south campus responded, “Why do we have departments...?” North campus IDPs are sometimes viewed by departments as an annoyance or burden that takes resources away from departments. Even when the great value of some IDPs is acknowledged, the monetary models and calculations of teaching efforts on campus contribute to a mentality of seeing resources as “our department’s” rather than as the university’s. We often lose sight of our communal intellectual responsibilities and opportunities. We do not think this will serve us well in the 21<sup>st</sup> century where even disciplines such as literature and engineering are interaction to create new theoretical models.