Faculty and Student Prospectus

2 History of the IIP

3 Structure of the IIP

10 Submitting an Application

11 Information for the Student

12 Information for the Faculty

11 Checklist of Requirements

Editor and photographer: Mary Kamensky
The University of Montana Graduate School

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HISTORY OF THE IIP

More than 100 universities in the United States offer a doctoral degree in interdisciplinary studies, including Harvard, Stanford and the University of Washington. The University of Montana began offering an interdisciplinary doctoral degree, the Individualized Interdisciplinary Program (IIP), in the fall of 2001.

In 1999, then UM Vice President for Research Lloyd Chestnut suggested establishing an interdisciplinary doctoral degree based on his experience at Ohio University where the degree was offered. Former Graduate School Dean David Strobel spent two years researching interdisciplinary doctoral programs across the country before proposing the adoption of the degree to the Board of Regents.

One of Dean Strobel’s sources of information on interdisciplinary programs was a $515,000 project funded in 1998 by The Pew Charitable Trusts. The project posed a challenging question: “How can we re-envision the Ph.D. to meet the needs of the society of the 21st century?” The principal investigator, Jody D. Nyquist of the University of Washington Graduate School, maintained a Web site until her retirement in 2003 that summarized continuing research on doctoral education and the posting of examples of best practices.

Specific recommendations resulting from a national conference in 2000 on re-envisioning the Ph.D. included the following:

* The need to provide explicit expectations for doctoral students.
* More adequate mentoring.
* Exposure to a greater variety of career options.
* More recruitment and retention of women and students of color to diversify American intellect.
* More scholar-citizens who see their special training connected more closely to the needs of society and the global economy.
* The need to balance the deep learning of the disciplinary doctorate with the variety of interdisciplinary challenges.

The IIP at The University of Montana was designed to provide students and faculty with a flexible option capable of responding to these developing changes in doctoral education.
A parallel interest developed during the past few years by U.S. governmental funding agencies to stimulate cross-disciplinary graduate research. The National Science Foundation, for example, conducted nationwide forums in the 1990s to determine how the agency could best support cutting-edge research. Their findings showed that much of this research was taking place in the interstices between disciplines, but were not being encouraged because the divisions of NSF corresponded to traditional major academic disciplines. NSF developed a “cross-cutting” program division that includes interdisciplinary programs, programs that are supported by multiple directorates at NSF, and programs jointly supported by NSF and other federal agencies.

The Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship Program (IGERT) is an example of a cross-cutting program established by NSF in 1997. The program is intended to “catalyze cultural changes in graduate education for students, faculty and institutions, by establishing innovative new models for graduate education and training in a fertile environment for collaborative research that transcends traditional disciplinary boundaries.”

Programs like IGERT closely match the recommendations developed by the “Re-envisioning the Ph.D.” project, including an intention to facilitate greater diversity in student participation and preparation, and to contribute to the development of a diverse, globally engaged scientific workforce to solve real-world problems.

**Structure of the IIP**

The Individualized Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program has been designed with a student-centered learning approach that places the student as the driving force of their own learning. As such, it requires a student who is highly motivated, has a focused goal and/or research project in mind, as well as being able to actively participate in his/her own educational process. The IIP utilizes the synergy of the student’s drive and the guidance and mentorship of faculty towards the completion of a unique plan of study. The IIP is not an online or long-distance degree.
George Price
IIP degree awarded summer 2006
Lecturer, Native American Studies Department and African American
Studies Program
The University of Montana

Dissertation Title:
The Easton Family of Southeast Massachusetts:
the Dynamics Surrounding Four Generations
of Human Rights Activism, 1753-1935
1. Research Problem

In light of an increasingly complex and interconnected world, the IIP allows for the incorporation of diverse and different disciplines of study not found in traditional Ph.D. programs, thus tailoring the educational experience to the interest of the student. The focus of the IIP is not on disciplines but on a problem to be solved. The Ph.D. is a research degree. The starting point for the student is to bring forward a draft of a research problem that will be the primary goal of the individualized program.

2. Doctoral Committee Members

Students will seek out faculty members to serve on their IIP committee who have experience and expertise in assisting the student on developing and executing the research problem. All members of the IIP committee must hold a doctorate degree or the terminal degree in their field and at least one member must be from a UM doctoral degree granting program. The Director of Interdisciplinary Programs or the director’s designee from a doctoral program will serve as an ex officio (non-voting) member of the committee. The chair of the student’s committee will be the principal adviser throughout the program and must be from a discipline that offers a graduate degree.

It is expected that solving the problem will be facilitated from engaging multiple perspectives, knowledge bases and experiences, not by approaching it through a narrow band of reference. Thus, the committee makeup should be designed to insure the interdisciplinary nature of the degree. The power of the program is manifested through the collaborative dynamics of the student and faculty committee as the proposal evolves through inevitable changes and modifications. Because this negotiation between the student and the faculty takes place before the student applies to the program, there is no discrepancy between the expectations of the student and what the doctoral program has to offer.
Heather Cahoon
IIP degree awarded spring 2005
Tribally enrolled Pend d’Oreille
Flathead Reservation, Montana
Adjunct Professor, Native American Studies Department
The University of Montana

Dissertation Title:
For Better or Worse: Flathead Indian Reservation Governance and Sovereignty
3. Objectives
Students will work with their committee to articulate a set of objectives for the program. Objectives are the skills and competencies they need in order to prepare and execute the research and reach their course and comprehensive exam requirements, and professional goals. Faculty participation in this part of the program plan is essential because students aren’t always aware of what they don’t know or need. As an example of an objective, one IIP student sought to develop the skills to become a competitive grant writer. Another IIP student wanted the requisite skills to become a competent university professor.

4. Assessment of Objectives
For each objective there must be an assessment to verify the student has achieved the skill or level of competency expected at the doctoral level. There are many ways to assess outcomes, but the procedure recommended for the IIP is to develop a portfolio. The student will work with his or her committee to define each outcome assessment that will go into the portfolio. In the grant writer example above, the student put drafts and the final grant proposal in the portfolio along with a critique the granting agency returned. Upon awarding of the degree, the portfolio may be submitted to potential employers to explain what the student did for the IIP and the skills acquired in the program.

5. Curriculum
The student will work with his or her committee to define the experiences necessary to achieve the skills and competencies articulated in the objectives. A total of 45 credits are required beyond the master’s degree, and at least 10 of these credits will be dissertation research.

If the student is missing foundational areas of disciplinary content knowledge, graduate level courses found in The University of Montana Catalog at http://www.umt.edu/registrar/ might be deemed appropriate. For example, all IIP students should have the preparation necessary to design, execute and analyze research information.
The student’s committee will work with him or her to use the flexibility of independent study, independent research, internship and seminar credits to creatively construct individualized experiences that will provide the systematic development of doctoral level objectives. The flexibility of these classes is in combining different disciplines and styles of leaning during the PhD.

In the case of the student who wanted to be a professor, he worked with faculty on pedagogy and curriculum development, and received feedback on classroom presentations and assessment, as well as the latest technological advancements for classroom and distance learning. He also was given the opportunity to apply management and problem-solving skills in committee and task-focused environments.

The content and format of the comprehensive exam is negotiated between the student and the faculty committee.
Udo Fluck, Ph.D.
Hometown: Wiesbaden, Germany
IIP degree awarded fall 2003
Associate Director, International & Global Studies Program
–Director of Multicultural Learning Solutions, Office of International Programs
–Adjunct Assistant Professor, Cross-Cultural & Global Competence
The University of Montana

Dissertation Title:
Development of an Online Supplement to Reduce Ethnocentrism
SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION

1. Student’s Committee Review
The committee is the student’s de facto department. All application materials
must be submitted to the student’s committee in advance of the application
deadlines. The committee makes certain all application materials are in order.
The chair of the committee will provide the committee’s recommendation on
the application form, sign it and submit the application packet to the Graduate
School.

2. IIP Admissions Committee Review
The Graduate School will submit the application packet to the IIP Admissions
Committee of the Graduate Council for review immediately after the following
deadlines:
- For fall semester admissions: April 1
- For spring semester admissions: November 15

The IIP Admissions Committee is comprised of five faculty members from
Schools or Colleges that offer graduate programs. At least three of the five
must be from different doctoral-degree granting programs. In addition to
evaluating the program of study, the Admissions Committee uses the
following criteria in making a recommendation for full admission:
- The student must have a master’s degree or equivalent that includes at
  least 30 credit hours of graduate work.
- 3.5 graduate GPA.
- GRE General Test and if relevant TOEFL (>600) scores.
- Relevance and quality of professional work to date for potential for
  Ph.D. level work.
- A clear indication the proposal is for a truly integrative Ph.D. that cannot
  be constructed using an existing UM doctoral program.
- Student cannot have been rejected from a traditional doctoral program.

The Admissions Committee can recommend either rejection of the application,
full or provisional admission, or they can return the application to the
student’s committee for additions or corrections. Return of the application
usually occurs if the proposal is unclear, missing required information, or lacks
the necessary connection between objectives, assessments and curriculum
elements. The Admissions Committee will only review a returned application
once.
The IIP Admissions Committee of the Graduate Council makes the final recommendation for admission. The Dean of the Graduate School and the Director of Interdisciplinary Graduate Programs makes the final admissions decision.

Information for the Student
All prospective applicants must first consult with the Director of Interdisciplinary Graduate Programs before beginning the application process. It is highly recommended that a prospective student spend at least a term of residency at The University of Montana either as a non-degree graduate student or as a student in an existing graduate degree program. Experience has shown that it is nearly impossible for a student to find members of a committee and negotiate a program of study from a distance.

The reasons for the recommendation to enroll as graduate non-degree at The University of Montana are threefold:

a) It allows students to get to know professors and the departments of the disciplines s/he wish to combine in the M.I.S. or I.I.P. degree, thus building their academic network.

b) Financially, if students would be paying out-of-state tuition, and wish for in-state tuition, they can start the Montana Residency process. Please go to http://www.umt.edu/grad/Prospective%20Students/Residency.php for information on Montana residency. Note that registering for more than 6 credits per semester (including summer school) creates a strong presumption the student is here for educational purposes and will likely disqualify them from achieving in-state status.

c) The graduate non-degree status allows students to receive graduate credit for course work. Up to nine non-degree credits may be applied toward a subsequent degree program upon approval by the student’s Committee’s Chair. You can find more information about this at http://www.umt.edu/grad/Apply/Graduate%20Nondegree%20Admission.php.

The reasons for the recommendation to be enrolled in an existing graduate degree program is the same as reason a and c above.
Students should not expect that all research ideas will be supported by faculty. The IIP calls on faculty to engage in support of this graduate training above and beyond their regular loads. Presumably faculty will more likely invest time and energy in a student and research proposal that is of high quality and significance and is intellectually stimulating and intrinsically rewarding. The University of Montana faculty also cannot be expected to have expertise in all fields and subfields.

Financial Information
IIP graduate teaching assistantships may be available from the Graduate School. If the assistantships are available, preference will be given to students who have teaching as one of their stated objectives and can show how it will be used to develop a systematic program of training for the professorate. Other IIP students have applied for doctoral fellowships and scholarships or graduate research assistantships on faculty research grants. Because IIP graduate assistantships are not regularly available, students are highly encouraged to have a plan for funding their interdisciplinary program.

INFORMATION FOR THE FACULTY
The student FTE generated by the IIP automatically goes to the department of the instructor of the credit. Graduates of the program are counted externally as interdisciplinary, but internally are credited to the department of the student's major professor and mentor. The academic deans and the provost have agreed to recognize and note the significance of service on interdisciplinary committees when reviewing FEC documentation for merit, tenure and promotion.

The faculty involved in the IIP process have a different role than those in traditional programs. Faculty will act as mentors and champions for the IIP student, helping them construct the curriculum, promote understanding of the doctorate process and the skills needed to successfully navigate it, as well as guide the different research steps.
Through engagement in the IIP process, faculty will enjoy the benefits of a synergetic process where cooperation between faculty and student will build knowledge from different disciplines and foster the ability to think outside their own disciplines or areas of expertise. The IIP creates opportunities for faculty to engage in cross-disciplinary professional development.

Only one in 30 students who make inquiries regarding the program actually generate a proposal. This reflects the great deal of work required up front before an application is made and that faculty members have held students to high standards. Successful applicants are generally mature, nontraditional students who have professional work experience and are able to identify important real world research problems worthy of time and energy to develop and execute.

Questions should be directed to the Director of Interdisciplinary Graduate Programs.
CHECKLIST OF REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DOCTORAL INDIVIDUALIZED INTERDISCIPLINARY PROGRAM (IIP)
(Applicant)

IMPORTANT!! ITEMS 1 - 6 MUST BE COMPLETED BEFORE AN ONLINE APPLICATION IS SUBMITTED.

Applicant name: ____________________________________    SSN or UM ID: __________________
Semester Applying For: _____________________________________________

1. Committee Chair identified (Name, Dept, email): ________________________________

2. Initial meeting with Director of Interdisciplinary Studies to discuss plans (Date): ______

3. Letter of Intent: (Y/N): ______

4. Assemble admission packet materials for your Committee:
   a. GRE test scores submitted to UM and if relevant TOEFL (>600) scores also(Y/N)
      Test Date: ______ V: ___ Q: ____ W: ____
   b. Masters Degree that includes at least 30 credit hours of graduate work and a
      minimum of 3.5 GPA. Transcript included (Y/N): ______
      Institution: ___________________________________________
   c. Official transcripts from all previous institutions included (Y/N): ____
   d. Curriculum Vitae included (Y/N): _____
   e. Three letters of recommendation (Name, Dept):
      i. ______________________________________________________
      ii. ______________________________________________________
      iii. ________________ _______________________________________

5. IIP Proposal
   a) Academic and professional goals, personal statement. This section would include descriptions
      about the relevancy and quality of professional work to date and potential for PhD level work as
      well as provide a clear indication the proposal is for a truly integrative PhD that cannot be
      constructed using an existing UM doctoral program. Articulation of objectives (skills and
      competencies) to be developed in preparation of research goals or professional goals.

   b) Relevant Research Plan with, at minimum, PhD level research questions. This section
      should include a statement of research problem(s) and a relevant, detailed research plan that clearly
      describes the methodology and approach that will be used to address the research problem(s).

   c) Curriculum Plan that includes proposed courses of study, brief description of these courses and
      their relevancy to the IIP.

   d) Assessment Plan that includes details for how the student’s progress in the IIP will be
      assessed. This section should also include details about the format and protocol of the students’
      Comprehensive Exam. Please include a timeline for the IIP which would include the courses,
      assessment, comprehensive exam and final defense dates, various stages of the dissertation research
      plan, and deliverables (i.e., manuscripts, books, presentations, final dissertation, etc.)

6. Commitment letters from committee members (List name, department and phone).
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* Must be a faculty member of a doctoral granting program.

7. Online application filed (Date): ______________

8. Statement by Applicant:
   I affirm that I have not applied to and been rejected by, or been dismissed by, an existing doctoral program at
   the University of Montana.

   Print Name                   Signature                   Date
CHECKLIST FOR APPLICANT’S COMMITTEE

(Y/N)

_____ The committee has reviewed the relevance and quality of professional work to date and potential for PhD-level work.
   Comments:

_____ There is a clear indication that the proposal is for a truly integrative PhD that cannot be constructed using an existing University of Montana doctoral program.
   Comments:

CONTACT INFORMATION

Blakely Brown, Interim Director of Interdisciplinary Graduate Programs
The University of Montana Graduate School
Lommasson Center 224
Phone: 406.243.2572
Fax: 406.243.4593
e-mail: blakely.brown@umontana.edu
http://www.umt.edu/grad/Programs/