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The NSF Ponders an Interdisciplinary Future

By Rick Szostak, President
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The National Science Foundation report "Rebuilding the Mosaic" (see <http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2011/nsf11086/nsf11086.pdf>) is intended to guide the NSF's approach to the social, behavioral, and economic sciences over the next decade or two. As such, it should be of considerable interest to scholars of interdisciplinarity. Happily, the vision expressed in the report is of research that is increasingly "interdisciplinary, data-intensive, and collaborative." And the NSF sets itself the task of better supporting this type of research.

Scholars of interdisciplinarity—and our colleagues in the Science of Team Science—should seize the opportunity to inform the NSF of how it can better support interdisciplinary and collaborative research.

The report is grounded in 252 'white papers' submitted to the NSF by scholars from across the social and behavioral sciences. The report celebrates the coherence of the advice received. Everyone, it seems, predicts an interdisciplinary and collaborative

future. Four areas of interdisciplinary collaboration—population dynamics, disparities, communication/language, and new media/social networking—were highlighted in multiple submissions, and will

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receive particular attention from the NSF as it moves forward. [I note that interdisciplinary humanists have much to contribute to at least a couple of these areas.]

An important minority of white papers warned the NSF not to go so far in its support of interdisciplinarity that it neglects disciplinary research. Interdisciplinary within AIS have generally (though not unanimously) favored a symbiotic view of disciplines and interdisciplinarity. We can thus communicate to NSF a positive message that supporting interdisciplinarity and supporting specialized research are complementary activities. We

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Interdisciplinarity and Learning Communities

By Joan Fiscella
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Part 1

Many publications about learning communities have been issued from the Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education. Two articles in *Integrative Pathways* will review several of these publications: This article is Part 1; Part 2 will be included in a future issue.

The Washington Center publications are edited monographs with chapters addressing topics from the perspective of particular

BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

higher educational institutions (community colleges, four-year colleges, and universities). The strength of these works is that they support the idea, mentioned by several authors, that many community learning programs are specific to the institution's own

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The NSF Report

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can at the same time draw on interdisciplinary critiques of the present structure of disciplines to suggest ways in which specialized research might be pursued in a way that facilitates interdisciplinary collaboration and integration of insights.

The report appreciates that interdisciplinary research is usually stimulated by interest in real world problems. It seems that interdisciplinarians could usefully flesh out this insight as well.

Though interdisciplinarity and collaboration were widely advocated, the path to facilitating these was less clear: "...the best approach to achieving effective collaboration itself is by no means obvious" (p. 19). The report then lists several of the barriers to effective collaboration. Interdisciplinarians have of course identified a range of useful strategies for both research and administration.

Though the report often conflates 'interdisciplinarity' and 'collaboration,' it does appreciate that this link is often unstated in its white papers. It would be useful to remind the NSF of a long tradition of successful individual interdisciplinary research. Some of the barriers to effective collaboration recognized by NSF—such as disciplinary suspicion of interdisciplinary publications, and grantmaking structures organized by discipline—apply to the individual interdisciplinarian as well, and thus need to be addressed if individual interdisciplinarity is to be encouraged.

Several submissions addressed issues of theory and method. The interdisciplinary insight that different theories and methods have offsetting strengths and weaknesses would seem relevant here. Disciplinary perspectives generally include strong preferences for a subset of relevant theories and methods. Interdisciplinary

research, aiming at a more inclusive approach to problems, must often transcend these disciplinary biases/limitations.

Since the report often talks about data (but generally in separate sections to its discussion of interdisciplinarity), an appreciation that different disciplines tend to value different types of data deserves emphasis. Indeed, there are often fierce debates regarding the validity and reliability of other disciplines' data. Interdisciplinary collaboration and conversation will often require mutual acceptance of different types of data.

What next? The NSF intends for this report to spur further discussion: "These are first, not last, words." (p.27). As one strategy, the NSF intends to organize conferences and 'expert groups' that address both the substance of research and programmatic structure. While it speaks explicitly about organizing conferences in the four subject areas listed above, my reading of the report is that it would be open to the idea of a conference on "best practices in interdisciplinary research." After all, the NSF can hardly hope to best allocate scarce research dollars to interdisciplinary research without some appreciation of how interdisciplinary research is best performed and assessed. AIS—and our partners in the International Network for Interdisciplinarity and Transdisciplinarity (including the Science of Team Science group)—would have much to contribute to such a conference or 'expert group.'

The NSF did host a conference in 2010 that looked at interdisciplinarity in the natural sciences. [Perhaps because of its natural science focus that conference is not mentioned in this report.] That conference was self-consciously exploratory and focused largely on how to study interdisciplinarity in general. (In the report of that conference AIS was recognized as the largest and longest-standing scholarly

organization devoted to the study of interdisciplinarity). A conference focused on identifying best practices around a handful of key questions (including how to formulate a good interdisciplinary research question; how to integrate insights from different disciplines; whether/how to establish an interdisciplinary research team; and how to communicate across disciplinary boundaries), and drawing lessons from both theory and practice, would seem a logical next step.

The NSF is also quite concerned with issues of graduate training. Notably, the white papers only rarely addressed this issue at length, but in follow-up conversations the question of how to train graduate students for interdisciplinary research often arose. The report favorably cites two white papers (one written by a scholar associated with the Toolbox project at the University of Idaho) advocating "systematic training in methods of interdisciplinary research and synthesis" (p.18). Again, the AIS community has much to say about the challenges of an interdisciplinary career path both for those with a disciplinary or interdisciplinary graduate training. While the original focus of AIS was on undergraduate teaching, our members, journal and conferences have increasingly addressed issues of graduate education and interdisciplinary career paths in recent years. The literature on interdisciplinary graduate training is small but growing, and a handful of scholars connected to AIS figure very large in this. AIS could thus also play an important role in providing advice on graduate training.

The AIS Board will communicate the thoughts above to the NSF. We encourage AIS scholars to let the NSF and/or us know of further (or just better worded) advice that you might have. This appears to be a genuine moment of self-reflection on the part of the NSF, and we should ensure that they receive the best advice we have to offer. ■

Everyday Life as Interdisciplinary Common Ground

Henri Lefebvre wrote over 60 books during his 90 years. What follows is a brief examination of two important passages from his body of work, focusing on his *Critique of Everyday Life*, offered by Patrick Gamsby. What is important for interdisciplinarians here is the way that Lefebvre (pronounced “luh-FEV-ruh”) deals with the unclassifiable. Developments in interdisciplinary methodology have emphasized the integration of disciplinary insights, and are therefore dependent upon classification schemes as organizational research tools. Nonetheless, the interdisciplinary approach to knowledge is often engaged with phenomena that fall in the gaps between the disciplines. For Lefebvre, the unclassifiable is not simply that which engages multiple categories of knowledge, but rather what remains after classification schemes have been exhausted. This “residue” possesses unique, holistic qualities that are the basis of the common ground Lefebvre finds in “everyday life,” and this, in turn, is an instructive approach for interdisciplinarians. Patrick Gamsby is completing his interdisciplinary PhD at Laurentian University with a dissertation on Henri Lefebvre’s latent theory of boredom, and he works in Scholarly Communications at Duke University’s Perkins Library.

—James Welch IV

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An interesting passage in the works of French intellectual Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991) describes a brief exchange between himself and an interlocutor by the name of Olivier. Olivier begins the dialogue by trying to locate Lefebvre’s disciplinary background by proclaiming, “You are a philosopher.” To this, Lefebvre swiftly replies, “Not exactly.” Olivier shifts from the humanities to the social sciences and asks “sociologist?” only to have Lefebvre retort, “Not anymore.” Evidently sensing where this line of questioning is going, Olivier exclaims in frustration, “You toy with the unclassifiable. Have the courage to be what you are” (as cited in Elden, 2004, p. 4). What is so intriguing about this assertion is Olivier’s insistence on conflating courage with a classifiable, disciplinary perspective. What Olivier fails to notice is that the boundary crossing, interdisciplinary nature of Lefebvre and his work is actually the way he can be classified. All of Lefebvre’s work can be safely characterized as defying disciplinary classification, but this is especially evident in the three volumes of his *Critique of Everyday Life*.

In the first volume of the *Critique*, Lefebvre argued

EMERGING SCHOLARS FORUM

that the “most extraordinary things are also the most everyday; the strangest things are often the most trivial” (1958/1991, p. 13). Here, Lefebvre is making a seemingly paradoxical claim about the unity of opposites, where the ordinary lurks in the extraordinary and the extraordinary hides in the everyday. According to Lefebvre, everyday life signifies the modes of life produced and reproduced within the social and historical processes of modernity. In other words, although there has always been daily life, the processes of modernity resulted in new experiences of time and space, with new routines, new technologies, a new emphasis on leisure, and therefore transformed what it means to experience life on a daily basis.

Lefebvre’s project was an attempt to decode the modern world through the concept of the everyday. No small task by any stretch of the imagination, Lefebvre was not attempting to singlehandedly divulge all the secrets of the world, he simply wanted to provide a path into understanding the complexities of modernity. Lefebvre uses a screen as a metaphor to further illustrate the problematic. The everyday is a screen in both senses of the word, both concealing and revealing the modern world (Lefebvre, 1988, p. 78). He most succinctly lays out his object of analysis for the *Critique of Everyday Life* (1958/1991) in the following passage:

Everyday life, in a sense residual, defined by “what is left over” after all distinct, superior, specialized, structured activities have been singled out by analysis, must be defined as a totality. Considered in their specialization and their technicality, superior activities leave a “technical vacuum” between one another which is filled up by everyday life. Everyday life is profoundly related to *all* activities, and encompasses them with all their differences and their conflicts; it is their meeting place, their bond, their common ground. And it is in everyday life that the sum total of relations which make the human—and everyday human being—a whole takes its shape and its form (p. 97).

There are two concepts that ought to be highlighted from this passage: *totality* and *what is left over*.

First, the concept of totality recurs throughout Lefebvre’s work on everyday life. It is something that Lefebvre felt could never be grasped by a single discipline, as disciplines tend to isolate facets of life and inevitably blur the concept of totality. Lefebvre argued that “Ideas have boundaries. We must do everything in our power to find out where these boundaries lie,

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Bibliographic Essay

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student body, the community with which the institution is affiliated, and the particular mission and goals of that institution. On the other hand, many of the writers make a point of broadening their own perspectives to show how a particular program is a contribution to the improvement of undergraduate education, and they give suggestions that could be adapted to other institutions.

Although Interdisciplinarity is not an explicit core concept in each of these essays about learning communities, nonetheless it is clear to the reader that integration of individual classes (within or across disciplines), team-teaching, teamwork across organizational divisions of a college, and partnerships between higher education units and community organizations are essential to the success achieved in the programs discussed. Mentioned or implied more than explicated, interdisciplinarity is a valued component or goal in many programs described. Barbara Leigh Smith and Lee Burdette Williams (“Academic and Student Affairs: Fostering Student Success” in *Learning Communities and Student Affairs*) for example, provide a description of learning communities that makes interdisciplinarity explicit: “The term learning community as we use it, refers to a variety of ways of intentionally redesigning the curriculum by clustering or linking two or more courses, often around an interdisciplinary theme or problem, and enrolling a cohort of students” (p.1). The definition provides a common understanding of a learning community for discussion of other publications as well.

A context for the value of these works is highlighted in the recent *Academically Adrift* although neither

The following publications are included for discussion here:

- Smith, B.L. and L.B. Williams, with others. 2007. *Learning Communities and Student Affairs: Partnering for Powerful Learning*. Learning Communities & Educational Reform, Fall. Olympia, WA: The Evergreen State College, Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education.
- MacGregor, J., Ed. (2003) *Integrating Learning Communities with Service-Learning*. National Learning Communities Project Monograph Series. Olympia, WA: The Evergreen State College, Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education, in cooperation with the American Association for Higher Education.
- Taylor, K., with W.S. Moore, J. MacGregor, and J. Lindblad. 2003. *Learning Community Research and Assessment: What We Know Now*. National Learning Communities Project Monograph Series. Olympia, WA: The Evergreen State College with the Association for Higher Education.
- Arum, Richard and Josipa Roksa, *Academically Adrift*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011, is also mentioned as part of a context for learning community studies.
- Bystrom, Valerie. Teaching on the Edge: Interdisciplinary Teaching in Learning Communities, in *Innovations in Interdisciplinary Teaching*, Carolyn Haynes, Ed. Westport, CT: American Council on Education/Oryx Press, 2002, pp. 67-93.

interdisciplinarity nor learning communities is a focus (nor an entry in the book’s index). Authors Arum and Roska report that in the light of the Collegiate Learning Assessment, recent higher education learning levels are unacceptably low; that is, in general students are not acquiring skills of critical thinking and complex reasoning sufficient for workplace needs. Several factors contribute to inadequate performance. For instance, some students have reported their own emphasis on spending little time on studying, indicating that student peer culture is at odds with academic culture. Higher education institutions themselves are also contributing to the problem, either by acceding to student culture or by placing faculty priorities elsewhere than teaching (pp. 1-31). While Arum and Roksa see the need for validation of their findings, they argue for organizational change in higher education institutions, greater

accountability, and a change in the campus culture for students, in part through faculty setting higher expectations for students.

In their essay in *Learning Communities and Student Affairs* Smith and Williams also outline comparative changes in higher education since the early 1990s: greater numbers of students attending college; lower rates of graduation; more students outside the traditional age range of 18-22; greater numbers of part-time and off-campus students. Smith and Williams acknowledge that the division of labor (both academically and organizationally) within educational institutions does not help students succeed. They do more than lament recent conditions; instead they propose that one way to improve organizations of higher education and to revise the curriculum is through learning communities. The importance—necessity—of collaboration between

academic and student affairs in higher education institutions is at the heart of successful learning communities. Smith and Williams also caution that collaboration must include both assessment of programs and research.

Other chapters include descriptions of programs that incorporate collaboration between student and academic affairs at community and four-year colleges, and universities: Iowa State University's almost 70 learning communities depended on forming organizational structures, establishing learning outcomes and assessment, facilitating meaningful communication, and providing recognition for all involved. Temple University's program focused on first-year transitions and promoted interdisciplinary studies; collaboration among administrative units has made the programs successful. Sacramento State University's programs targeted first generation and low-income students as they completed the general education requirements and became integrated into the higher education community. LaGuardia Community College has implemented its learning communities along the lines of career academies, which typically provide a strong academic program and partner with business or other professional groups, leading to internships. LaGuardia "recently developed first-year academies as a way of providing coherent, integrated services for students in need of developmental education" (p. 82). The Evergreen State College also addressed the needs of underrepresented students by partnering with community colleges. Student Services personnel were integrated in recruitment, administration, advising, and instruction. Thus these essays provide multiple models for implementing collaboration among units in a college or university

and give suggestions of potential outcomes. Although not a focus in this set of essays, the collaboration goes beyond the institution itself when it partners with outside agencies or businesses (e.g., LaGuardia and Evergreen. The power of such partnerships is more fully developed in MacGregor's work discussed below). The monograph concludes with Aaron M. Brower and Karen Kurotsuchi Inkelas' clear, concise and readable essay on assessing community learning programs. They acknowledge that different institutions will require particularized assessments and suggest ways to create instruments for such assessments. They also point out the limitations of assessments created for a particular institution.

Two other monographs published through Evergreen State's Washington Center came out several years earlier (2003). Jean MacGregor's (edited) *Integrating Learning Communities with Service-Learning* looks at the two innovations in undergraduate education as some higher education institutions bring them together with the goal of strengthening students' learning. Marie Eaton, Jean MacGregor, and David Schoem's opening chapter compares similarities in the two practices in terms of intention; opportunities for restructuring teaching and learning; the possibility of shifting teacher roles; explicit community-building, and help for students to prepare for a diverse democracy. Successful programs provide examples of the conceptual and practical benefits of integrating service learning and learning communities. Each chapter is based on a particular program, drawing from community colleges, four-year colleges, regional universities, and major research universities. Interdisciplinarity is sometimes mentioned; e.g., University of Michigan's Community

Scholars program (p. 20), or recognized as central to the curriculum; e.g., Evergreen State College (p. 35). Evergreen has a community-based research program, which collaborates with service agencies. Evergreen's program is helpful in acknowledging and dealing with difficult issues for students and the agencies, such as self-determination, ethics, and balances of power. Callen County Community College sets up interdisciplinary themes for its learning community and service learning. George Mason University's interdisciplinary New Century College is the home of its service-learning component. The Law and Diversity Program at Fairhaven College (Western Washington University), is an example of recognizing the strength that diversity brings to interdisciplinary teaching and learning. This essay also shows programs' dependence on college organization and personnel. Carefully developed relationships within the college and with community partners are essential, and major changes can threaten programs.

Learning Community Research and Assessment: What We Know Now provides an overview of both "research" (broad, generalizable studies) and "assessment" studies (with a narrow framework, for improvement of a particular situation.) The monograph also distinguishes between research and assessment of either single-institution studies or multi-institution studies; single-institution works are the primary focus, however. The information includes summaries, matrices of key characteristics, and for some, in-depth description. The monograph ends with an extensive bibliography of the studies. (I should note that Arum and Roksa include this work in their bibliography.)

To analyze the selected studies

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Wasn't it Grand? The 2011 AIS Conference

By Judy Whipps, Professor
 Liberal Studies Department
 Grand Valley State University
 2011 Conference Co-chair

The 33rd annual AIS conference was held in Grand Rapids, Michigan, sponsored by Brooks College of Interdisciplinary Studies and the Department of Liberal Studies at Grand Valley State University. The conference was held at the beautiful Amway Grand Hotel, situated on the banks of the Grand River. Given that the first stand-alone AIS conference was held at GVSU 30 years ago, the conference theme of "Traditions and Trajectories" allowed us to look back on the history of AIS and interdisciplinary studies as well as look forward to new developments in the field. The conference was dedicated to the memory of GVSU Dean Forrest Armstrong, one of the founders of AIS.

Several interesting threads developed over the course of the sessions. Diversity was a theme that ran throughout the conference, starting with the Thursday night keynote address and building throughout in various breakout sessions. Victor Villaneuva, author of *Bootstraps: An American Academic of Color*, started the discussion with his fiery keynote talk on "The New Racism" analyzing the ways that language and rhetoric are used to perpetuate ongoing prejudice. Azfar Hussain's rousing Saturday luncheon talk on "Caliban's Interdisciplinarity: Poetics, Politics and Praxis" was a fitting ending corollary to Villaneuva's opening. The hotel site gave us additional international voices as over 4,000 Amway distributors from Latin and South America descended on Grand Rapids and filled the hotel during the time we were there. It gave us many opportunities to practice



Bill Newell, far left, Julie Thompson Klein, and Rick Szostak discuss the "State of the Field" in a plenary session during the 2011 conference in Grand Rapids, Michigan.



Allen F. Repko and Pauline Gagnon, far right, present a workshop on the "Nuts and Bolts of IDS." The 2nd edition of Allen F. Repko's text, *Interdisciplinary Research Methods*, was published just prior to the opening of the conference.

our Spanish (or hand-gesturing!) in giving out directions to the various hotel locations.

A "State of the Field" session by the leading thinkers in interdisciplinary theory was suggested by members at the wrap-up session of the 2010 conference in San Diego. That turned out to be a terrific suggestion. In a plenary session on Thursday afternoon, Bill Newell spoke on theory, Julie Thompson Klein gave an update on institutions, and Rick Szostak talked about interdisciplinary research. Both Szostak and Newell expanded earlier definitions of interdisciplinarity to discussions of transdisciplinarity,

particularly integrating it with Science of Team Science (SciTS), Transdisciplinarity Network (TD-Net) and the International Network of Interdisciplinarity and Transdisciplinarity (INIT). Julie Thompson Klein organized various types of interdisciplinary institutions into progressively more complex programs and curricular offerings. These talks provided a context for further discussions about the future of interdisciplinarity during the conference sessions over the next few days.

The Scholarship of Interdisciplinary Teaching and Learning sessions was another

strong conference thread that provided conference goers an opportunity to reflect on best practices in terms of interdisciplinary pedagogy. Effective integrative learning is a priority at GVSU and this was reflected in the number of sessions about pedagogy by Liberal Studies faculty. We also heard from other experts in the field, including Veronica Boix Mansilla, the luncheon speaker on Friday and a session presenter.

Approximately 145 people from the U.S., Canada and Europe attended the conference, with an additional 30+ GVSU students volunteering during the conference. A highlight for many of us at the conference was the first peek at the new 2nd edition of Allen Repko's *Interdisciplinary Research Methods* book—with a box of books hot off the press arriving just days before the conference. They sold out all too quickly. Also of interest to conference goers was the new *Case Studies in Interdisciplinary Research* by Repko, Szostak and Newell. The 25 undergraduate students in my new Interdisciplinary Research course were excited to have the opportunity to purchase books and attend sessions by AIS members whose work they had been reading.

We had been enjoying a sunny and warm October until the day the conference started. Even though the beautiful weather didn't hold, many of us ventured out to experience West Michigan on Saturday, attending the Fred Meijer Gardens, the Ford Presidential Museum across the river, or to walk to the various art venues still up from ArtPrize.

On behalf of the 23 members of the GVSU AIS conference planning team, let me say that we had a lot of fun in October hosting all of you. We look forward to seeing you all again in Michigan next year at the conference hosted by Oakland University. ■

Forrest Armstrong: Integrative Learning & a Value-centered Life

By Christine Drewel, Instructor
Liberal Studies Department
Grand Valley State University

Introduction

This essay explores the biography of Forrest H. Armstrong (1943-2000) and his connections to integrative learning and interdisciplinarity through three main values: Intellectual Rigor, Integrity, and Liberal Education. While any biography of this length cannot possibly be comprehensive, it is my hope that its content can provide a new layer of dialogue to the ways we as interdisciplinary scholars and teachers create meaning through our daily interactions and our values. In essence, we often “talk the talk” of interdisciplinarity and integrative learning without thinking about the values underlying how we “walk the walk.” Forrest Armstrong excelled at doing both.

My interest in Forrest developed through my position at Grand Valley State University (GVSU) as a faculty member of the Liberal Studies Department in the Brooks College of Interdisciplinary Studies. Forrest died the first semester I arrived, and although I never met him, I recall colleagues talking about him and the dedication of the conference room in Lake Superior Hall to his memory and contributions. Through my research on curriculum development and institutional history at GVSU and the William James College (WJC), I began to develop an appreciation for his work and became further intrigued when I initiated conversations with people who knew him. The words they consistently used to describe their relationship with him formed the basis of the idea for this essay. When GVSU lobbied for and was accepted to host



Forrest Armstrong

the 33rd Association for Integrative Studies (AIS) Annual Conference, the theme “Traditions and Trajectories: Integrative Learning and Interdisciplinarity” became the perfect venue for further reflection on Forrest's influences at GVSU.

Much of what I have gathered here comes from the recollections of those who knew Forrest, and through the lenses of hindsight and the passage of time, in some cases more than 30 years. Therefore, I view much of this work not so much as a gathering of facts, but of memories and impressions. Because of this, I have left most of the quotes intact and in the words of those who knew Forrest. These memories, quotes, and impressions contain much wisdom and have offered me a direct path into articulating the values that support what I strive to do on a daily basis. On behalf of those who knew him, and those of us who wish we had, I dedicate this essay to the memory and appreciation of Forrest H. Armstrong and his wife, Dorothy.

Intellectual Rigor

Forrest H. Armstrong received his AB in American Studies from Yale in 1965 and his MA (1966)

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34th Annual AIS Conference

October 11-14, 2012

Hosted by Oakland University,
Rochester, Michigan



Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of the organizing committee and the Bachelor of Integrative Studies at Oakland University, I would like to invite you to join us October 11-14, 2012, in Rochester, Michigan, for the 34th Annual Association for Integrative Studies Conference.

The 2012 theme will be “Public Policy and the Promise of Interdisciplinary Dialogue.” We invite you to join us for a rigorous dialogue about the promises of interdisciplinary studies. Interdisciplinary studies and education have received increased attention amongst educational institutions and public policy makers. As Kleinberg (2008) has indicated, “Interdisciplinary departments, programs, and centers are poised to lead the university in a new direction.” This dialogue is very promising, yet much is to be done to make good on this promise. We welcome you here to talk about advancing interdisciplinary research, designing and teaching interdisciplinary courses/programs, and living up to the promise of an interdisciplinary dialogue.

Come to Rochester, Michigan, for our breathtaking fall season, great food and hospitality. Rochester provides a perfect mix of historic and hip, and is home to more than 350 shops, salons, restaurants and professional service businesses, 85% of which are independent merchants. Downtown Rochester’s natural beauty is attributed to the waterways that surround the city and the abundant green space that three parks and two winding trails offer.

In early November of this year, you can check out our website at www.oakland.edu/2012AIS for updates and opportunities for the 2012 Conference.

The conference team and I are looking forward to hosting you here in Rochester!

For the Committee,

Scott L. Crabill
Conference Planning Chair
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CALL FOR PROPOSALS

34th Annual Association for Integrative Studies Conference
 October 11-14, 2012
 Rochester, MI 48309
 Hosted by Oakland University

“PUBLIC POLICY AND THE PROMISE OF INTERDISCIPLINARY DIALOGUE”

The promise of interdisciplinary dialogue has received considerable attention within higher education and public policy in the past decade. The dialogue proposes that interdisciplinary studies provide a means for understanding and addressing complex social issues. As Kleinberg (2008) has indicated, “Interdisciplinary departments, programs, and centers are poised to lead the university in a new direction.” This dialogue is very promising, yet much is to be done to make good on this promise.

To facilitate this dialogue, we welcome proposals for presentations in multiple formats, including but not limited to, roundtable discussions, integrated panels, workshops, and performances that address issues such as:

- Higher Education and the Public Good
- Risks and Rewards of being Interdisciplinary
- Urban Reclamation
- Surveillance, Privacy, and Security
- Creativity and Innovation

While the program committee welcomes sharing best practices, we are especially interested in presentations, events, and conversations that self-consciously consider the dialogue of Interdisciplinary Studies and the complex and dynamic relationship with public policy and the economics of higher education. As always the Association for Integrative Studies welcomes more presentations that advance its mission to promote the interchange of ideas among scholars and administrators in all of the arts and sciences on intellectual and organizational issues related to advancing integrative and interdisciplinary studies.

All submissions must be made electronically using the proposal submission form. Contact information for presenters and co-presenters, a brief 50-word bio for each, a proposal of max. 250 words, an abstract of max. 75 words, A-V needs, length and type of presentation (paper, panel discussion, roundtable, etc.) will be required. The deadline for proposal submissions is March 30, 2012, and we expect to respond to proposal writers by May 30, 2012.



Forrest Armstrong

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and PhD (1970) in American Culture from the University of Michigan. His major research interest areas were The American Novel, American National Government, and American Intellectual History. He was a Teaching Fellow in Political Science at the University of Michigan, and secured tenure as an Associate Professor in Urban Analysis and Political Science at the University of Wisconsin Green Bay (UWGB). He became the founding chair of the Urban Analysis Concentration, an interdisciplinary department with faculty in the social sciences and humanities that offered 60 interdisciplinary courses. He later was appointed Assistant to the Vice Chancellor and Associate Dean of Academic Affairs at UWGB.

In 1980, Armstrong left UWGB to become the Dean of William James College (WJC), one of the original four experimental cluster colleges at Grand Valley. Joseph P. Helgert, PhD and Associate Professor of Communications at GVSU remembers, "Since Forrest was recruited from a nationally recognized experimental public university, he brought that tolerance for risk-taking with him and encouraged it in his reports" (J. Helgert, personal correspondence, August 22, 2011). Forrest not only had the experience with experimental and interdisciplinary programs, he was also philosophically and intellectually aligned with the mission, vision and values of the College. WJC followed a "Statement of Principles and Objectives," which were:

1. To be person-centered, fostering intellectual and personal growth within a community of learners.
2. To be future-oriented, connecting our programs and

activities with humanity's projected needs.

3. To be career-directed, with programs and activities designed to enable persons to do personally satisfying and socially useful work, as well as to enable those who wish, to move on to advanced study (GVSC 1976-77 Catalog, p. 106).

Forrest believed that knowledge could lead to wisdom when we relate it to purpose. Purpose and dedication, along with knowledge and ability, create a meaningful life. "The university seeks thus to become a part of the world rather than apart from it," he once stated (Armstrong, "Liberal Education," 1976).

In addition to the three operating principles, faculty in WJC did not make the traditional distinction between 'career education' and 'liberal arts education.' Rather, they believed career-oriented subjects could be studied and taught in a liberally educative manner. They championed that

one's career, one's vocation—the way one acts for good or ill in the public world or in organizations and institutions—is one of the critical determinants, perhaps the most critical determinant, of personal identity and potentiality for personal growth. We think a person's potential is largely a function of the public contexts in which that person acts and the public responsibilities which he or she assumes (GVSC 1976-77 Catalog, p. 106).

Forrest supported this philosophy. His personal statement indicates that education should emphasize "relationships and synthesis rather than narrowness and fragmentation, yet without sacrificing rigor. Done well, the undergraduate experience will help students develop the capacity to continue learning outside

formal educational structures, to adapt, innovate, and address changing circumstances throughout life" (Armstrong, 1982). In essence, Forrest knew that a faculty member's responsibility was to start students on this intellectual journey, not complete it.

WJC maintained a non-departmental form of organization so that problems rather than disciplines remained the focus of the educational enterprise. Students in the college created programs rather than declared majors, and in doing so worked to foster pluralistic and transdisciplinary perspectives. Barbara Roos, Associate Professor of GVSU's School of Communications and former WJC faculty recalls,

Forrest did not try to change the heart of WJC governance. It was implemented philosophically and in practical terms during the weekly Council meetings (all faculty plus one less of elected students). All decisions in the college were made via majority vote of the Council. He did not try to dominate the WJC faculty retreats either. The following is very important: he did NOT run the college, he facilitated collective decisions. That's an important strength and I bet it wasn't easy! (B. Roos, personal email, August 21, 2011)

Deanna Morse, Professor of Grand Valley's School of Communication remembers,

I was there when he was hired as Dean of WJC, and I supported him in the transition. He was honest and straightforward. That quality was what I appreciated the most. If you had an idea (a proposal for some activity, some curriculum change, etc.), he would listen to your proposal, and tell you, up front, why he thought it was worth pursuing, or why he thought it wouldn't fly. He didn't

just say 'go write something up and come back to me' if he knew it wasn't worth it. He didn't waste your time—he was direct, clear, fair, and pragmatic. (D. Morse, personal email, August 21, 2011)

Originally the programs in WJC included interdisciplinary concentrations in four main areas: Administration and Information Management, Arts and Media, Urban and Environmental Studies and Social Relations, but students could also design their own concentrations. Neither courses nor faculty were confined to or associated with any one program, "making the actual concentrations in programs the constructs of individual students according to their individual aims and goals" the focus (GVSC 1976-77, pp. 106-107). WJC faculty promoted integration throughout learning experiences, both in and outside the classroom, and Forrest worked with faculty from a wide variety of disciplines to support that value. Former President of Grand Valley Arend "Don" Lubbers explains,

Forrest would say, here's the concept or idea or thought. Here's the reason and logic behind it and then would carry it through. This had a huge influence on the institution. Forrest was good at giving structure and unity to a group of people who could have easily operated in chaos, and that was his strength and style. I imagine it was a lot like herding cats. These were strong intellectuals and the strength of his intellect was enough to keep them together and working well and actually lead them. (D. Lubbers, personal interview, September 21, 2011)

For a variety of reasons, Grand Valley reorganized in the early 1980s. WJC dissolved, and the curriculum and faculty merged into divisions.

In 1982, Forrest became the Dean of the Arts and Humanities Division and continued on in that capacity until 1997. Joseph Helgert, Associate Professor of Communications, recalls,

Forrest could be blunt and tough but always managed to put a collegial face on his interactions. He set the tone for the division as caring yet demanding. Few administrators manage that balance. He also gracefully saw the connections between the various disciplines within the division and encouraged our collaboration. He often said that a dean had no power whatsoever. But for those who knew him best, he was an inspiration and that *was* his power. (J. Helgert, personal email, August 22, 2011)

Don Lubbers, commenting on Forrest's leadership, adds,

To Forrest, the force of an idea was all consuming. His capacity for deep thought was unusual. When he came to a conclusion it was well thought out and if it was right, it assumed a rigidity. This is not to say he would not or could not change his mind, he could and did bend, but it needed to be on intellectual terms. (D. Lubbers, personal interview, September 21, 2011)

This intellectual rigor translated into every aspect of Forrest's life. Glenn Niemeyer, former dean and colleague of Forrest, talked about their Friday morning tennis games:

Forrest wanted to know all the mechanics of how to hit the ball and worked hard to learn every detail and technique. I finally said to him "just hit it rather than know it!" But it was the not-knowing that drove him. Forrest was interested in experimentation as a way to get at the learning process. He

became more comfortable when he became the Dean of A&H. He sincerely enjoyed talking with people, and you knew this. (G. Niemeyer, personal interview, September 26, 2011)

Committed to the idea of interdisciplinarity and integrative learning, Forrest was also instrumental in the development of the AIS. Bill Newell, Executive Director of AIS, recalls,

In April of 1979 Forest Armstrong attended the National Conference on the Teaching of Interdisciplinary Social Science where he became one of the founders of the Association for Integrative Studies. The following year he attended the first AIS conference held in Washington, DC in conjunction with the annual meeting of the American Association for Higher Education, and became AIS President-elect. In the spring of 1981, President Forrest Armstrong hosted the AIS conference at William James College where he was the Dean. He appointed Ray Miller as the inaugural editor of the *Issues in Integrative Studies*, which started as Occasional Papers but quickly matured into a professional journal. In 1982, Forrest set up a design competition among his students that resulted in several possible logos for AIS; among them was the winning design, A, I, and S as interlocking jigsaw puzzle pieces, that we used for a quarter century. (B. Newell, personal email, September 14, 2011).

Forrest gained years of experience dealing with the administrative realities and struggles of interdisciplinary programs. Newell also remembers, "I was particularly impressed by Forrest's standards of intellectual rigor. His Yale education was clearly in evidence, his personal integrity, and his astute insights into

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interdisciplinary administration.” AIS member Ray Miller adds, “Forrest’s passion for what he believed in is what I remember about him. Unfortunately for Forrest and others like him who believe passionately in unconventional approaches to education such as interdisciplinarity, they are perceived as threats by conventional administrators” (R. Miller, personal email, September 3, 2011). AIS member Michael Field recalls an AIS conference in which Armstrong, “spoke eloquently and movingly and at some length about how his own program was basically being gutted, or discontinued. After that almost every one of the participants told stories of difficulty, administrative decisions that thwarted their intentions, etc. Folks really got into the discussions” (M. Field, personal email, September 2, 2011). Armstrong never lost sight of the people or the underlying values in these struggles.

Armstrong authored many key articles including, “Reflections on the Nature of Interdisciplinarity” (*Issues in Integrative Studies*, vol. 6, 1988), “Faculty Development through Interdisciplinarity” (in *Interdisciplinarity: Essays from the Literature*, William H. Newell, ed., 1998), “The Social Sciences as a Domain of Knowledge” (*Resources in Education*, August 1980). He understood the nature of and difficulties involved in pursuing interdisciplinarity and integration from the student, faculty and administrative perspectives, and challenged people to engage in meaningful dialogue about these ideas.

His intellectual rigor also contained a sense of humor. Joseph Helgert, remembers, “Forrest had a sense of wry humor. When email was first implemented at Grand Valley, he would send me an email and then run downstairs to my

office to tell me that he sent me an email all the while knowing the irony behind his actions. One could not be irritated long with someone that could find humor in many situations.”

Deanna Morse adds,

Here’s a sort of funny story—I had an office in Lake Superior Hall, in one of those circular pods downstairs—five offices in a common enclosed hallway. In my pod, there was a guy who smoked cigars. It was SO stinky. Terrible. I had to keep my door closed, but it felt claustrophobic. And then students wouldn’t know that I was in there; why was my door closed? So I finally complained to Forrest about this situation and asked if there was anything he could do. He told me that he couldn’t stop the guy from smoking, but he was sympathetic, he recognized the problem. His solution, his proposal—was that he offered to swap offices with me. He must have known that I wouldn’t take him up on his offer and move into the Dean’s Office! Or maybe he was prepared to swap! I don’t know. But I thought it was a respectful and genuine offer... the kind of thing I valued in him. And shortly afterwards, there was the “no smoking” indoors policy. (Maybe he worked behind the scenes to get it in place, I don’t know.) I was glad to work with him.

Integrity

Many people described Forrest as a man who knew the right thing to do, and did it. And he expected others to do the same. Wendy Wenner, Dean of the Brooks College of Interdisciplinary Studies, considers Armstrong a mentor.

When he was interviewing me, he gave me one of the best interviews I ever had, an “inbox scenario” in which he literally gave

me a stack of letters/situations, let me read them, and then respond what I would do and how I would handle them. It was an incredibly thought provoking way of judging my character and judgment. And he taught me how administration worked. As an assistant dean, he treated me very well and taught me a lot about myself. He taught me that I was good at diffusing tension and helped me grow because of that trait. At the time, there were not a lot of mentors for women, and he was one. (W. Wenner, personal interview, September 13, 2011)

Forrest was committed to the process of intellectual inquiry as a value in and of itself, as well as a way to develop integrity and character. David Rathbun, Professor in the School of Communications, explains,

He asked good questions, especially when he was unfamiliar with the area. For example, he was not familiar with art when the division was formed and he worked hard to broaden his understanding and especially his view of contemporary art. He would roll up his sleeves and dig in. He knew when he did not know something and intentionally strove to improve his understanding. He challenged ideas not people, and he cared about both. And disagreements were never personal. He once disagreed with someone over something for 17 years, and he was patient. (D. Rathbun, personal interview, September 1, 2011)

Wendy Wenner adds,

He was fair, and had high expectations. You had to earn his respect and demonstrate a sound intellectual position. But he also cared about your intellectual development and took the time to

learn and understand what you were interested in. It was hard NOT to respect him for this. His integrity was impeccable, and once he said/took a position, it was practically impossible to get him to change it. If you had lost integrity with him, it was hard to redeem it, but that was one of the characteristics that made him so consistent and transparent. You knew where you stood with him.

Liberal Education

In his personal statement Forrest explained, "My educational philosophy springs from three central tenets: 1) That ideas are of profound importance in our lives; 2) That our lives ought to be guided by the understanding of moral and ethical principles which can come from a liberal education; and 3) That our lives ought to a significant extent be directed toward the service of society, in recognition of the linkages among us." He was firmly committed to integration and the education of the whole person through interdisciplinary processes of inquiry.

In his essay "Liberal Education and Societal Need at University of Wisconsin—Green Bay" Forrest summarized his thinking about this philosophy and idea,

Ultimately, any succinct effort to define or even characterize liberal education is likely to fall short; the concept is too complex, too subtle. Two such attempts, though, are revealing. Theodore Greene proposed that a liberal education should: increase the ability to be literate and articulate, increase one's knowledge about oneself, one's physical world and social environment; increase one's sense of values; and widen one's horizon through the relationship of the part to the whole. Jacob Neusner suggests that liberal education requires 'exploration of the context in which the self takes

shape. Liberal learning brings one out of one's self and leads to an encounter with other people, their yearnings and perplexities. (Armstrong, 1976)

Forrest brought this philosophy into the classroom and was passionate about teaching. He also declared,

These, then, are at the heart of education for me: To help students come to grips with meta-questions such as what constitutes the good life and why, to envision alternatives, to see relationships between values and actions, to perceive themselves as part of a larger whole, to think critically yet creatively, to be able to apply their knowledge and insights throughout the fabric of their lives, and to be committed to do so for the good of society. Ideally, students will finish their undergraduate experience thinking not that the learning process has ended for them, but that it has just begun. (Armstrong, 1982)

A liberal, and a *liberating*, education was the foundation for all of Forrest's academic pursuits.

Conclusion

We often talk about interdisciplinarity and integrative learning in the contexts of theory and application. I realized through this process of "getting to know" someone I never met, that I live much of my academic life creating categories, borders and boundaries in order to manage the dozens of tasks I have to accomplish every day in teaching, service and scholarship. I like to think of myself as a good organizer and multi-tasker. But in doing so I realized I have lost sight of the bigger picture: that my life carries meaning and has an impact on people in powerful ways, and many of these ways, unfortunately, occur

unconsciously and unintentionally.

Forrest died after a battle with cancer on December 5, 2000, at his home in Estes Park, Colorado.

Glenn Niemeyer recalls, "He called me from Colorado on the morning of the day he died. I was caught up in a very busy time, and of course you never know these things at the time. We talked for a while, but I do remember I felt pressured because of my busyness, when I should have given him all the time he wanted without worrying about anything. I know he made other calls that morning, and, in retrospect, he probably knew these were the last calls. I truly appreciated that he called me, but I wish there were a way I could have that phone call again." Reflection and the difficult lesson of learning through regret are often obvious at the time of death, but Forrest taught me that through the art of being present and maintaining integrity, such wisdom can occur through daily tasks and interactions as well. Deanna Morse adds, "At his memorial service on campus, there was a graduate who spoke about being in a class with Forrest—he changed her life, as she described it. He worked with her outside of class, and taught her how to do research, how to construct a paper, and I think she went on to law school. I remember this clearly from the memorial service—that one speech was a tremendously moving tribute to him." And it is a reminder that the often mundane and repetitive activities we as teacher-scholars undertake each day can have a lasting and meaningful impact.

I realized that while I strive to practice interdisciplinarity and integration in my daily tasks, I am, in this process an interdisciplinarian and integrator; in other words, I am creating an identity based on these principles. Forrest taught me to reflect on and critically challenge ideas, not people. If this is true, and

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I sincerely think it is, then I should also be striving to make connections and form relationships between people, and experiences, and values as I complete my daily tasks and develop my ideas. I often get so busy with the doing, I forget that in the doing, I am becoming. And I forget to recognize that others are becoming too. I wondered how often my lack of presence and awareness of this underlying value actually hindered others in their process.

As often happens when I begin projects, the process of learning about Forrest changed me in many ways. What I thought would be just a “simple biography” and a gathering of facts and personal anecdotes turned into something much more. It turned into an autobiographical reflection. In hearing the stories and words people used over and over to describe their memories of Forrest, I was struck by their consistency. And the people I interviewed did not know what others were saying and knew Forrest from a wide variety of positions and interactions. The words “integrity” and “intellectual rigor” and “values” came up repeatedly. My question of “Who was Forrest Armstrong and how did he connect with the idea of integrative learning and interdisciplinarity?” and its answer, “In basically everything he did through the daily living of and reflection on his values” turned into another question: “How am I doing the same?”

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Bibliographic Essay

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the authors developed a series of questions with the aim of determining intended student participants, teaching team members, program goals and outcomes, as well as research or assessment goals, data, and conclusions for each. The authors highlight “notable” studies along the way, which are generally remarkable for unusual research approaches and helpful findings.

The research studies consist of dissertations, theses and single-institution research studies. Of the 32 formal research studies analyzed, 28 were doctoral dissertations; of these “[f]our focused exclusively on student perspectives experienced in interdisciplinary, team-taught coordinated studies learning communities” (p. 7).

Three of the four interdisciplinary studies are considered notable. Margaret Tennant, 2003, used a qualitative approach to develop categories by which students understood their own learning; the outcomes were to help structure a model to be used across individuals’ learning (p. 10). A second notable study, Katherine Bernhardt Trow’s study of an experimental program at UC-Berkeley, was modeled after Alexander Meiklejohn’s University of Wisconsin experimental program. Trow’s work using interviews of alumni showed that it took years after leaving the experimental program for the alumni to understand its impact. In her interdisciplinary study, Patricia E. Russo (1995) addressed issues of learning communities for students with diverse backgrounds. “Russo’s research is notable for explicitly examining the potential and challenges of collaborative learning environments for diverse college learners” (p. 12).

Although several years old, the research and assessment volume

speaks to calls for accountability and shows evidence of successful outcomes. The studies are not sufficient, however. The authors themselves recommend further work to strengthen knowledge about learning communities: better understanding of complex outcomes for students, faculty and the institution; more information to understand specifically what pedagogy, curriculum, and learning practices encourage better learning; longitudinal studies especially with regard to outcomes. One other contribution that can serve as a base for such studies is Valerie Bystrom’s chapter in *Innovations in Interdisciplinary Teaching* that carefully and helpfully lays out levels of interdisciplinarity and learning communities from basic to a fully integrated model with examples of benefits to students and to faculty who participate.

Taken together the three volumes on learning communities show aspects of implementing learning communities, examples of successful programs, the value of partnerships with agencies or other educational institutions, particularly in service learning, and the close relationship to interdisciplinary undergraduate education. Numerous studies demonstrate types of research and assessment that have been done, and more importantly what is still needed in order to understand what can be done to improve undergraduate education. An important dimension of these studies reviewed here is that learning communities are not limited to one or another type of higher education institution. In Part 2, a later essay, the volumes will address the differences in types of schools more specifically.

Thanks to Julie Thompson Klein for her suggestions regarding the topic and for identifying specific works. ■

Emerging Scholars

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and if we are to map them out we must cross them" (1961/2002, p. 29). Boundaries lose their rigidity if one crosses them and thinks in terms of a totality. Utilizing a complex concept such as totality was no guarantee for making everyday life any clearer or simpler. Rather, totality is the virtually unattainable goal that presents "almost insurmountable difficulties" (Lefebvre, 1961/2002, p. 186). It was simply a concept that Lefebvre thought academics could not do without if they were to attempt to understand the modern world (p. 180).

Second, there is the issue of what is "left over"—the residue left behind after all structured activities have been singled out through analysis. This is a key aspect in the study of everyday life. There are essentially three perspectives on this matter. To a metaphysician, everything is left over and this concept lacks precision. To positivists or scientists, nothing, or virtually nothing, is left over, as everything is already accounted for through exhaustive analysis. To Lefebvre, there is simply "something left" (1961/2002, pp. 46-47). This something, the fabric of everyday life, is equally minor and major. It surrounds everyone, so it is a major area of potential inquiry, yet it largely escapes their attention, and is thus often deemed as insignificant, or minor. On this last point, Lefebvre (1958/1991) defends his position by asserting that "People who gather flowers and nothing but flowers tend to look upon soil as something dirty" (p. 87). In this case, the everyday is the soil, and without it, other, more recognizable aspects of life, exemplified by the flower, could not exist.

In general, Lefebvre took issue with the growing mass of specialists that constructed what he referred to as the "fragmented studies" of

the disciplines (1961/2002, p. 181). Specialists in this sense are those who are quite content to stay within the confines of a certain area of study, but also protect its boundaries from outsiders. According to Lefebvre (1958/1991), the policing of disciplinary borders is entirely problematic. He declared that inquiry should be open to anyone, yet "too many specialists regard their 'field' as private property" (p. 26). Lefebvre (1981/2005) also asserted that, "There is a vulgarity peculiar to the specialist who knows what comes within his narrow competence, but is unaware of the world" (p. 75). The specialist, then, can only glimpse at fragments without seeing their unity, or totality. Lefebvre (1958/1991) argued that "there is a profound if still unrealized unity between domains of activity," such as poetry, science, art and knowledge, etc. (p. 68). By calibrating one's interdisciplinary gaze at what is left over and noticing the common ground, or totality of everyday life, there is the potential to help fill in certain lacunae that go unnoticed by disciplinary specialists.

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