



THE NEWSLETTER

# INTEGRATIVE PATHWAYS

OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

Vol. 42, No. 1-2

ISSN 1081 647X

James Welch IV, Editor

## IN THIS ISSUE:

- **Global Interdisciplinarity**  
p. 3
- **Change of Plans for AIS 2020**  
p. 7
- **Call for Proposals for 2020 Virtual Conference**  
p. 8
- **ATLAS Focus on Transdisciplinarity**  
p. 9
- **Champlain College Offers New Degree**  
p. 10
- **Klimek Matches Content to Audience**  
p. 12



Integrative Pathways is published quarterly by The Association for Interdisciplinary Studies, Oakland University – Macomb, 44575 Garfield Road (Bldg. UC2, Suite 103), Clinton Township, MI 48038.  
Phone: 586-263-6098  
FAX: 586-263-6261  
E-mail James Welch IV: james.welch@interdisciplinarystudies.org.  
Find Integrative Pathways at [www.interdisciplinarystudies.org](http://www.interdisciplinarystudies.org). Members may email [ais.interdisciplinarystudies.org](mailto:ais.interdisciplinarystudies.org) for password information.

## AIS Board of Directors Enjoy Hospitality and Plan for 2020

By James Welch IV  
President

The Board of Directors met for a brief time before the Amsterdam conference. Board member Machiel Keestra kindly hosted our meeting in his lovely home in the city, providing coffee, stroopwafels, and even a Suriname home-cooked lunch. Frankly, it was difficult to stick to business in the midst of such hospitality, but we did our best. Reports were submitted by Board officers ahead of the meeting.

As part of a general AIS migration to take independent control over our website and telecommunications capability, we acquired a Google Suite license, and had a brief discussion on centralizing our files and communicating with our new [interdisciplinarystudies.org](http://interdisciplinarystudies.org) email

addresses for all AIS business. This will help us to organize our documents, records and archives.

AIS has also upgraded our financial organization with a Bank of America account. Our Business Manager, Scott Crabill, supplied a report on our fiscal activities and our current budget. AIS remains fiscally sound.

Due to increased responsibilities, the Board is considering revising that position and agreed that the title of Financial Director best describes its current duties, which combines duties traditionally held by the Business Director and Treasurer. We will finalize this description to be included in the revision of the AIS Constitution and By-laws.

*Continued on page 2*



*Prior to the Amsterdam conference, the AIS Board of Directors met in the home of board member Machiel Keestra. From left are Roz Schindler, president James Welch IV, Jennifer Dellner, Merel van Gogh, Sven Arvidson, Allison Upshaw, Khadijah Miller, and Heidi Upton.*

[ais.interdisciplinarystudies.org](http://ais.interdisciplinarystudies.org)

## Board Meets in Amsterdam

*Continued from page 1*

We also discussed the need to establish a PO box for our mailing address. Right now, our office is housed at the University of Oakland in Michigan.

Khadijah Miller, Vice President of Relations, discussed sending out our membership survey and strategies for engaging our members in volunteer work, task forces, etc. During the last election, we received comments from many members saying that they would like to be further involved in the organization.

Our Director of Digital Initiatives (DDI), Jennifer Dellner, reported that our transition to the new website went smoothly, and that we're in the process of fixing broken links.

Our incoming DDI, Marcus Tanner, spent many hours over the summer building the new website and transitioning documents from the previous site at Oakland to [interdisciplinarystudies.org](http://interdisciplinarystudies.org). He has also implemented a new system for new and renewing memberships in AIS. We are looking to update our logo for the website.

We also want to make sure our statement on diversity is prominently displayed on the site. We also talked about social media strategies. We discussed ways to help our more creative members feel like they have a place in AIS.

Sven Arvidson, Co-editor of *Issues in Interdisciplinary Studies*, presented a report co-authored with his fellow Co-editor, Gretchen



*The new Editorial Advisory Board now includes interdisciplinarians from around the globe, many of whom attended the Amsterdam conference and who organized an impromptu meeting on the conference site. Among the board were, from left, facing camera, Machiel Keestra, Pauline Gagnon, Jennifer Dellner, Sven Arvidson, Julie Klein, James Welch, Rick Szostak, Tami Carmichael, and Catherine Lyall.*

en Schulz. We discussed the volume guest edited by Tanya Augsburg, dedicated to the work of Julie Klein. The volume arrived before Christmas, and the table of contents was distributed at the Amsterdam conference.

The journal has recently updated its Editorial Advisory Board to include interdisciplinarians from all around the globe. Since many of them were able to attend the Amsterdam conference, an impromptu gathering was organized on the conference site.

Editor of *Integrative Pathways* James Welch then gave a brief report and asked permission to renumber previous issues for 2018-2019, in order to adjust for publishing delays.

The Board discussed International Relations and Sections coordination. We appointed out-

going at-large member Heidi Upton, to become sections coordinator as an ex-officio board member. Other ideas were floated for coordinating the expanding field of international relations.

Roz Schindler, our Conference Liaison, reported on present and upcoming conferences. Conferences are booked until the year 2023, and we are looking at another European conference in 2024. Jennifer Dellner, who is our current President-Elect, will become Conference Liaison after finishing her term in 2022.

Following best wishes for a fantastic conference, we adjourned to enjoy a nice lunch.

So that's our report. Please contact me if you have any questions or need additional information: [james.welch@interdisciplinarystudies.org](mailto:james.welch@interdisciplinarystudies.org).

# AIS Considers Challenges of Global Interdisciplinarity

By Machial Kestra and Linda de Greef  
Conference Co-Chairs

Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies • University of Amsterdam • The Netherlands

“If God were an interdisciplinarian, would She support the vision in interdisciplinary education that we’ve just unfolded?”

This question raised enthusiastic responses from the audience of the plenary discussion on ‘Radical redesign of interdisciplinary education in global contexts’ and represents the collegial and inspiring atmosphere of the Association of Interdisciplinary Studies 2019 conference on ‘Interdisciplinarity in Global Contexts’.

Motivated by current developments of highly innovative interdisciplinary programs represented by the panel and aware of the fact that interdisciplinarians will increasingly study and work internationally, audience and panelists considered whether we need to readjust our

education to accommodate such developments

The audience of the conference itself represented a great diversity, as some 300 participants arrived in Amsterdam, travelling from 29 countries dispersed across 5 continents, with backgrounds in a wide range of interdisciplinary education and research.

Taking a step back from everyday teaching, learning and research, participants noted that especially because different communities and disciplines are implied in interdisciplinary programs, we can observe serious lacunae still prevalent in our universities more generally.

Decolonization was mentioned in this context by panelists Valentina Mazzucato (Global Studies, Maastricht University, NL) and Aincree

Evans (international student, Maastricht University): obviously, entire communities or even continents are left out in our programs whereas one would expect interdisciplinary programs to be sensitive to such silence and remedy these blank spots.

The same holds for forms of expertise, subscribing as most of us implicitly do to a specific canon, excluding non-canonical sets of skills and insights prevalent in indigenous or other subdominant communities - a situation that needs to be addressed as well according to panelists Ana Corbacho (Espacio Interdisciplinario, University of the Republic of Uruguay) and panel chair Carl Gombrich (London Interdisciplinary School, UK).

At the same time, though, our programs and students need to be recognized and accepted by other, more traditional academic programs. Irrespective of attempts by interdisciplinary programs to innovate their curricula, in many cases we cannot but admit that commercial and other non-academic organizations are much faster in adopting skills, exercises and processes that are still unknown to most academics. In addition, as a group of audience members remarked, many innovative programs - like gender studies, critical race studies, sustainability studies - were initiated decades ago by critical students, rather than faculty or managers like us.

Taking these observations into account, most colleagues agreed that we can’t accommodate all such shortcomings within academia, so it

*Continued on page 4*



One of the panels at the 2019 AIS Conference, held in Amsterdam, discussed the challenges of global interdisciplinarity. The Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands, hosted the Conference.

## Global Interdisciplinarity

*Continued from page 3*

is important for us to explore opportunities to develop hybrid education or research projects with external partners.

Reaching out to and collaborating with extra-academic partners was one of the main themes of this AIS conference.

Important questions regarding this theme were: Are we sufficiently factoring in the power relationships that play a role when determining the research agenda? Who do we invite to participate? What role does (local) politics play?

Such inter- and transdisciplinary projects require a keen eye for difficult issues like the power and financial imbalances between partners, the flexibility with regard to language use, but also to how we can take locally produced knowledge more seriously than is often done. One of the remarks that were made - which received much acclaim from the conference participants - is that the names appearing on a scientific article should reflect all the layers of research collaboration and not only mention those who eventually penned down the article.

Addressing such issues, everyone agreed that working with extra-academic stakeholders – citizens, patients, farmers, and so on – requires academics in many cases to invest extra time, attention and self-reflection compared to usual academic work. Because of this, common constraints and requirements of academic projects need to be critically reassessed. The conference program included plenty of examples from

around the globe of student projects and courses demonstrating that linking classroom and field activities or community work do provide great opportunities for development of critical-thinking and problem-solving skills as well as the practical application of methodologies and theoretical perspectives.

Collaborating becomes considerably more challenging when the 'glocal' nature of our research is taken seriously: the interconnectedness of global phenomena with specific local contexts. One of the questions that was discussed during the plenary panel on the second day of the conference was: How should we adjust our inter- and transdisciplinary

---

*. . . everyone agreed that working with extra-academic stakeholders – citizens, patients, farmers, and so on – requires academics in many cases to invest extra time, attention and self-reflection compared to usual academic work. Because of this, common constraints and requirements of academic projects need to be critically reassessed.*

---

research processes and methods to account for these increasingly prominent glocal contexts?

Panel member Roderick Lawrence (University of Geneva, Switzerland), challenged the audience to reformulate the much-used slogan 'Think globally and act locally' into 'Think and act globally and locally'.

Julie Thompson Klein (Wayne State University, past president of AIS) reminded us to think more about the complexity of regionalism and how every region can have different outcomes on the reflection of a global theme, such as climate change, and the different forms of knowledge being brought to bear. Contemporary challenges, which are determined by global as much as local influences, require a coordinated approach on

multiple scales - local, regional, national, international.

Panelist Mahjoob Zweiri (Quatar University), speaking from experience in socio-political research in the Middle East, warned, though, that for adequate understanding of local conditions international researchers need to be more critical about their commonly held theoretical assumptions and not to undermine or ignore the self-understanding of local informants - even if the two are in conflict.

Researching global issues, such as sustainability, global migration, in- and exclusion in urban spaces, often necessitates integrating various forms of knowledge to inform our understanding. The diversity of actors and perspectives involved and their different power positions within society requires bringing new voices into research. For this, new forms of interaction and exchange might be required.

One workshop presented the Keti Koti Table dialogue method as a way to address personal experiences and insights that impact - implicitly, if not explicitly - upon collaboration, for example. Another workshop taught participants to embrace conflict as a way of overcoming challenges, while still another workshop offered an arts-based method to foster exchange and collaboration.

Interestingly, in several cases the arts were introduced as offering modes of interaction that suffer less from the power imbalances. Arts can invite participants to change their usual habits or attitudes. For example, arts were mentioned to encourage a stronger receptiveness to

*Continued on page 5*

## Global Interdisciplinarity

*Continued from page 4*

unfamiliar and local manifestations of a problem, to more productively engage with ‘mistakes’ than is common in academia, and to engage in innovative forms of co-creation. For example, in the workshop ‘Unheard voices’, academics and artists who have experimented with ways of integrating the arts into research on global issues present their work. There was an example from University Maastricht (NL) of a creative experiment to amplify the voices of transnational youth in interdisciplinary migration. The project aimed to develop a better understanding of the relationship between migration and young people’s life chances through writing and performance.

During the conference, several art exhibits and performances underscored the extraordinary power of the arts such that they should make academics pause. This immediately transpired during the conference opening session when AIS board member and opera singer Allison Upshaw, PhD, engaged audience members in polyphonic vocal exercises. She explained how these exercises prepared them for appreciating and handling the pluralism of voices and minds which were present during the conference.

Another art work also demonstrated how arts enable weaving together different threads of meaning without forcing judgements upon the audience. The ‘Memorial Rocas AR’ entailed a virtual tour of a locale in Chile which was used for torture during the Pinochet regime. The VR glasses showed interactive movie clips and pictures of the site integrated with historical and archeological findings about it - creating an impressive and informative acquaintance with this difficult polyphonic history. Clearly, then, the arts present

*The 2019 AIS Conference, held in Amsterdam, closed with Saturday’s Plenary session from the Young Scholars Forum: “Interdisciplinarity as Commonplace: Share your Dreams for the Future.” Panelists included, from left seated, Sandra van der Hel, Lucas Rutting, Roosmarijn van Woerden, and Elke Olthuis, and, standing, Patrick Hosea.*



not just another medium for interdisciplinary research and education, but demonstrate how such work is characterized by pluralism, ambiguity, openness.

Many students and early career researchers actively participated in the conference. In the closing plenary session on Friday, early career researchers shared their dreams about the future of interdisciplinarity. They expressed the wish that we will break away from the chains that confined us within our disciplines and that we will educate a new generation of academics with the courage and competencies to embrace differences. Most of all, they dreamed about a future where an explicit focus on interdisciplinarity will disappear with interdisciplinarity turned into our main modus operandi when we are confronted with the big challenges of our time. Concurring with this students’ dream, one of the student research poster competition’s winning teams demonstrated how their reflection on their collaborative research process was instrumental to exploring the opportunities and feasibility of combining food and energy production in agriculture.

Collaboration and interaction between audience members was aimed at during the conference, ensuring that participants’ travels would be justified beyond mere presentation of their work. Accordingly, the con-

ference consisted to a large extent of workshops, solution rooms, and themed panel sessions, and contained very few single paper presentations.

After three intense days we came to the final wrap-up of the conference with an outlook on the agenda for next conferences and future collaborations. Identifying main lessons of the conference, Ulli Vilsmaier (Leuphana Universität Lüneburg, Germany) emphasized the importance of reaching conceptual clarity together, of being aware of how we must operate along different levels of scale, and how we need to create new spaces for collaboration. Panelist Lucy Wenting (director of the hosting Institute for interdisciplinary Studies, University of Amsterdam), stressed that we need a real breakthrough in interdisciplinary education. New governmental structures and financial models can establish major breakthroughs, in addition to commitment of staff and administrators and creating safe havens for innovation within our institutions are necessary. Furthermore, she mentioned that even when the focus on certain social challenges might change in the future, as long as we equip students with the necessary meta-skills we can ensure that their preparation is future-proof. Khadijah O. Miller

*Continued on page 6*

### Global Interdisciplinarity

*Continued from page 5*

(Norfolk State University and AIS board member) argued that if we want to establish and expand global networks we should all be prepared to foster honest conversations which can at times also be uncomfortable. We have to ask ourselves: 'Am I a boundary for someone to cross?' We need to be really open to differences

and to recognize them for the depth that they bring.

With the AIS conference leaving North America for the first time in 41 years and bringing together an extraordinary international group of colleagues from an unfamiliar variety of perspectives on interdisciplinarity, transdisciplinarity and action research in a highly interactive program, we as conference co-chairs closed the conference by expressing our hope that what we learned and

experienced during the conference would have an impact upon our everyday practice, especially as this practice might need to deviate from its usual course in education and research, since it is an urgent need of our global community to address the well-chosen topic of the next annual AIS conference hosted by Sonoma State University on November 4-7, 2020: 'Wicked Problems and Interdisciplinarity: Sustainability, Resilience, and Designing the Future'.



*Interdisciplinarians from across the world gathered in Amsterdam for the 2019 Annual Conference of the Association for Interdisciplinary Studies. At top left, attendees enjoy a plenary conference session. Above, attendees participate in the Ketu Koti Table workshop, a technique for exploring differences. At left, conference-goers enjoy dinner, libations, and each other's company during a boat ride through the famous Amsterdam waterways.*

## Announcement by the AIS Board of Directors and the Sonoma State University Planning Team

At this time, because of the long-reaching effects of COVID-19 and Sonoma State University's movement to remote instruction, we are announcing that the 2020 AIS Conference will not take place as originally scheduled. We have postponed the full conference to November 9-12, 2022, with Sonoma State University as host. We will include the same overall themes of Wicked Problems, with a new Call for Proposals distributed in January 2022. Instead, we are offering an exciting **one-day virtual mini-conference on November 6, 2020**, focused on international and interdisciplinary responses to COVID-19. The cost will be \$25.

We are proud to present the tentative schedule for the virtual AIS mini-conference on November 6, 2020, hosted by Sonoma State University:



### Interdisciplinary Responses to the Pandemic: An International Forum



8:00 – 8:30 am

#### Welcome

Karen Moranski and Jennifer Lillig • Co-Chairs of 2020 AIS Conference  
James Welch IV, Outgoing AIS President

8:35 – 9:30 am

#### Plenary Session

Keynote Speaker (TBA)

9:45 – 10:45 am

#### Panel Discussion (Participants TBA): Higher Education Responses to COVID

11:00 am - 12:00 noon

#### Concurrent Sessions (TBA)

12:15 – 1:00 pm

#### Closing Session

Announcement of 2020-2022 AIS President and 2020-2021 Board of Directors  
Closing Remarks

Sonoma State is happy to receive proposals for the November 6, 2020, AIS mini-conference that focus on interdisciplinary responses to COVID-19. Proposals are due no later than July 15, 2020. Please submit proposals through [AIS2020.sonoma.edu](http://AIS2020.sonoma.edu). Presentation materials will be made available online on September 22, 2020, to promote dialogue and discussion on November 6.

We encourage participants to utilize this conference as a springboard for collaboration, further research, and follow-up at the 2022 AIS conference on Wicked Problems.

In addition, if you were hoping to have an opportunity for peer-reviewed publication on Wicked Problems prior to 2022, please think about submitting your research/scholarship or thought pieces to Integrative Pathways or Issues in Interdisciplinary Studies for consideration.

# Association for Interdisciplinary Studies

## CALL FOR PROPOSALS

### Interdisciplinary Responses to the Pandemic: An International Forum November 6, 2020

Every year, university communities find themselves facing unexpected crises resulting from local to global acts of nature, including wildfires, flooding, and pandemics. What is the role of universities and interdisciplinarity in leading during these challenges? Topics for this theme could include:

- How can interdisciplinarity help us in the zombie apocalypse solutions room (or the COVID-19 solutions room)?
- How do we leverage interdisciplinarity in managing emergency operations and supporting continuity of learning?
- How do we support equitable digital access and inclusive online learning environments, particularly when transition to a virtual classroom might be swift?
- How do we best communicate, across disciplines and across university units, to adequately manage safety, self-care, and learning during times of crisis?
- How do we incorporate these real-time wicked problems into the (virtual) classroom to facilitate learning in a way that engages the next generation so that history doesn't repeat itself?
- How can universities provide leadership and form strategic partnerships with local organizations, to bridge the crisis moving from theory to practice to support community rebuilding?

#### **Deadline and Submission**

The deadline for proposal submissions for the November 6, 2020 Mini-Conference will be July 15, 2020. All submissions must be made electronically using the proposal submission form on the 2020 Mini-Conference website [ais2020.sonoma.edu](https://ais2020.sonoma.edu).

The following are required for all submissions: contact information for presenters and co-presenters, a proposal title (20 words or less), a short description of no more than 50 words for the program, an abstract of no more than 200 words, the type of presentation (e.g., roundtable or panel discussion, solution room question, workshop, poster presentation, creative activity, or other). Please suggest a recommended timeframe for your proposal (e.g., 10 minutes, 20 minutes, or 60 minutes) noting that we may modify the time frame based on the number and type of proposals received.

We welcome all types of presentations, but this mini-conference is about integration, design, collaboration, connection, and creative problem-solving, so make sure your conference proposal builds in those elements for your audience. You will receive an email acknowledgement of your proposal submission. For further information, please contact [AIS2020@sonoma.edu](mailto:AIS2020@sonoma.edu).



# New Issue of ATLAS Focuses on Advancing Transdisciplinary Education and Research

By Rick Szostak

The 2019 issue of the ATLAS journal (<http://www.atlas-tjes.org/index.php/tjes/issue/view/10>) focuses on articles from the host organization's latest international conference. ATLAS stands for The Academy of Transdisciplinary Learning and Advanced Studies, founded in 2000 with the aim of advancing transdisciplinary education and research and sustainable development while also providing global exchange of information and a laboratory for collaboration.

Fundamentals of the ATLAS effort to develop a new transdiscipline include leadership in developing new models of innovative learning and teaching for transdisciplinary curricula, while also bridging science, technology, and arts, in addition to fostering green engineering and open science, inspiring global peace, and offering innovative publication.

ATLAS also sponsors conferences, meeting previously for example in the United States, Taiwan, and Romania.

The journal covers a wide range of topics, and ATLAS also invites book proposals. Its digital library has download modules in a variety of topics including A Networked Approach to Transdisciplinary Research and Education as well as Foundations for A Transdisciplinary Approach to Engineering Systems Research Based on Design and Process. For further details visit <http://www.theatlas.org/index.php>.

The lead article in the 2019 issue, "To be or Not to be Transdisciplinary, That is the New Question. So, How to be Transdisciplinary?," by Florent

Pasquier and Basarab Nicolescu, is well summarized by the first paragraph in its conclusion: "In conclusion, a new pedagogy has to include: the transdisciplinary approach and complex thinking, transdisciplinary consciousness, spirituality, the relation with nature and cosmos, creativity, practice of the arts, transpersonal psychology and soft skills."

Some of these elements will be fa-

encouraging students to think creatively.

Though Yeh does not explicitly talk about creativity, he gives useful examples of contemplative activities such as meditation, and of people thinking outside the box (General Kung Ming in the third century, Southwest Airlines, Grameen Bank), and especially transmitting ideas from one realm to another.

---

*Such projects are an important type of community development and can enhance the spirit of disadvantaged populations while providing a useful project for them to collaborate on. If your surroundings are bleak it is easy for your outlook to be bleak. The article inspires us to do more to understand the effects and best practices associated with such programs from a psychological and sociological perspective.*

---

My favorite article was "Transdisciplinary Art" by Lily Yeh. It seemed to me the most concrete, relevant, and useful article. Yeh discusses the value of collaborative urban art projects, such as constructing a mosaic in a rundown part of north Philadelphia. She recounts how one local drug addict became proficient at mosaic work and now works on other projects. Such projects are an

important type of community development and can enhance the spirit of disadvantaged populations while providing a useful project for them to collaborate on. If your surroundings are bleak it is easy for your outlook to be bleak. The article inspires us to do more to understand the effects and best practices associated with such programs from a psychological and sociological perspective.

The authors begin by noting that humanity faces complex and inter-related challenges that require a new approach. Their hope is not just to transform the academy but the world. Toward that end, they urge individuals toward self-knowledge, development of capabilities, and participation in community. The paper has lots of jargon and many three-dimensional diagrams.

The second article, "Towards a Framework for Transdisciplinary Problem Solving," by Raymond T. Yeh, emphasizes transcendent thinking. It then provides examples from the business world and from distant history. Although disciplines are not an explicit focus, AIS members may still find these examples useful in

The other articles address a wide array of topics: nerve function, electricity supply, transdisciplinary theatre, environment, agriculture, semiotics, poetry and quantum physics, theophobia, surveys, organizational learning, urbanization, supply chain innovation, and more. Though often needlessly jargon-ridden, these articles will be worth a read to those interested in these topics.

Champlain College Offers New Degree

## Interdisciplinarity Guides Faculty and Students

By Cynthia Brandenburg, Aziz Fatnassi, Michael Kelly, and Craig Pepin  
Champlain College • Burlington, Vt.

How can we best deliver undergraduate education at a time when the value of a college degree in an American context increasingly is called into question by students, their parents and politicians alike? As faculty with liberal arts backgrounds teaching at a small, private, and “professionally-focused” institution, we have spent a fair amount of time theorizing the “value” of what we can offer to career-minded students who are willing to pay the price of tuition partly in exchange for the promise of future financial rewards. And as a result, we have concluded that one of the most meaningful ways to approach our work is by explicitly connecting students’ academic work to their professional identity through a version of interdisciplinarity and integration that transcends traditional disciplines and cuts across professional fields of knowledge and practice.

Over the past 2 ½ years we have rethought how we structure degrees at our college, reimagining meaningful general education, and honestly evaluating how seriously we take the promise that our graduates will be proficient in the college-wide competencies.

These efforts will come to fruition this fall when we welcome our first students into Champlain College’s Degree Design Lab to pursue an “Integrative Professional Studies” degree. Students will choose two or three professionally-focused areas of study to create innovative combinations that don’t exist within traditional disciplinary and professional boundaries.

In the general education space,

students will engage in required integrative coursework that includes interdisciplinary research methods, experiential project design labs, and academic interrogation of work experiences. In particular, the project design labs provide space for students to apply interdisciplinary methods, both singly and in small groups to projects of their choosing.

With faculty support, students will be expected to draw from the arts and humanities, the sciences including mathematics, and the social sciences

---

*Our ultimate goal is to provide students with an integrated academic and professional experience that helps them discover practical solutions for real world problems, predicated on the notion that applied interdisciplinarity is a critical professional literacy.*

---

as they engage in their integrative work and research projects, thereby receiving a general education that meshes seamlessly with their professional foci and highlights how the liberal arts can practically enhance broader contextualization of specific professional experiences.

Throughout their time in the program, students will curate a reflective portfolio of their interdisciplinary work products which they will use to demonstrate proficiency in all twelve of our college-wide competencies prior to graduation. As designed, we believe our program offers an education that can move us beyond theorizing into a space of praxis that uses applied interdisciplinarity as a guide for the way we teach and the way students can learn.

In order to understand what this could look like in practice, let us

share three examples of students who plan to enter the Degree Design Lab come fall.

The first student is currently majoring in Cybersecurity but has a strong activist bent and has been engaged in a side project developing virtual training materials for unemployed women. In the Degree Design Lab, this student’s Integrative Professional Studies degree will consist of a thread in Cybersecurity or Mobile Application Development, plus Social Justice. She will receive academic support and credit for building out her project in design lab spaces with interdisciplinary faculty helping her to identify a variety of academic resources that will augment her thinking, and her project will become part of her competency

portfolio.

A second student began this year in our Social Work program but really wants to work towards establishing an international non-profit organization dedicated to providing global access to clean water. In the Degree Design Lab, this student will combine Advocacy, International Business, and relevant courses from Sustainability Studies to simultaneously complete her degree and begin working towards her future goals.

Finally, a third student will be entering Champlain this fall with the intention of combining Media Production and Law; while she isn’t precisely sure about a future career path, our program will provide multiple opportunities for her to explore her interests and encounter the ever-

*Continued on page 11*

**Champlain College**

*Continued from page 10*

evolving and complicated intersections between these two fields.

Our ultimate goal is to provide students with an integrated academic and professional experience that helps them discover practical solutions for real world problems, predicated on the notion that applied interdisciplinarity is a critical professional literacy. The work we imagine students doing in the program relies on a series of personal, professional

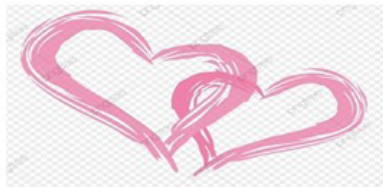
and civic contexts, and asks students to think about the reflexive relationships at work across each of these domains. At the same time, the habits and skills of students trained in interdisciplinarity neatly align with what future employers say they are looking for, including flexibility, agility, adaptable to change, and innovative (LaPrade et al., 2019) and “proficiency in a variety of skills and knowledge areas that cut across majors [disciplines]” (Hart Research Associates, 2018). We believe training students how to use fundamental interdisciplinary skills in a professional context, and teaching them in-

terdisciplinarity by application and “doing,” allows us to simultaneously uphold a principled stance about college as a public good while acknowledging the ways it can also serve as a practical training ground for the complexities of the 21st century.

Hart Research Associates (2018). *Fulfilling the American Dream: Liberal Education and the Future of Work*. Association of American Colleges and Universities. <https://www.aacu.org/sites/default/files/files/LEAP/2018EmployerResearchReport.pdf>

LaPrade, A., Mertens, J., Moore, T., & Wright, A. (2019). *The Enterprise Guide to Closing the Skills Gap*. IBM Institute for Business Value. <https://www.ibm.com/downloads/cas/EPYMNBJA>

**HEART  
To  
HEART**



**We welcome atoms from cosmic origin  
We welcome nitrogen from fiery stars**

**But where windblown nucleic acids twist  
& turn is where we encounter the  
Russian roulette of genotypes &  
phenotypes -  
phenotypes & genotypes - dancing  
across a field of quaking possibilities**

**In need of precise DNA replication  
In need of precise RNA transcription  
In need of precise protein translation**

**Just one mutational jumping gene  
transforms normality –  
to the one arm monster - so**

**the birthing out, the crying out is  
more like the cracking of an anguished  
egg -- morning is filled with mourning.**

**But as I place the stethoscope  
upon the newborn’s heart**

**She instinctively places her trust so  
deeply in mine – that  
it knows no bounds:**



**Swelling like the earth’s greatest seas  
Expanding like endless galaxies**

**Nearly taking  
my breath – away**

**But my attention remains close,  
closely attuned to her beating heart...**

*By John Decarlo*

# Internships vs. Interviews: Matching Course Content to Audience

By Julia F. Klimek  
Coker University

<https://interdisciplinaritytheorypractice.blogspot.com/>

I teach a semester-long, in-seat introductory seminar on interdisciplinary studies, to both majors and students enrolled for general education credits; the course accommodates about 10-15 students from first-years to seniors. At Coker, the interdisciplinary studies major allows students to combine two or three disciplines to prepare for careers in IT, coaching, web design, different aspects of business, graduate school in health care, and various other fields – so the group I work with, at any given time, is quite diverse in experiences and goals.

I use *Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies* (Repko, Szostak, Buchberger), but it is a bit high-pitched for my students, and I supplement

it with an internship (45 hours, either on- or off-campus), a research process paper, reflections, in-class interactive role playing and team games, and a book report – all of these additions are geared to put the theoretical textbook information into practice and promote comprehension of interdisciplinary practices in and outside of the classroom.

Ideally, over the course of the semester, students both understand the applications of interdisciplinarity in their chosen career field and acquire specific skills in communication, research, and critical thinking that put them on track for studies and career.

The learning experience of the internship allows my traditional students to observe and understand the practices of interdisciplinary work, such as perspective-taking, finding

common ground, breaking down complex problems, and understanding how multiple disciplines are involved in many work situations – for many of them, these internship experiences are the first time they participate in an office setting or organization in the field they wish to

---

*...my primary goal for these students is to make sense of their education (they are at a mid-point, for the most part) and gain control over the choices they are making: focusing on a major (usually business), connecting classroom learning with their work environment, planning a career that makes use of their new degree.*

---

enter professionally. They complete a reflection paper that specifically asks them about disciplines and interdisciplinary challenges, and their presentations, as varied as they are (and should be, considering their many fields and where they are in their studies), show their excitement.

I also teach a variant of the course in an online, 8-week term course to adult students, most of whom are transferring into the 4-year liberal arts institution under a bridge agreement – they are already in work situations, and none of them are majoring in interdisciplinary studies, so their needs are quite different – they also have often limited access to technology and connectivity, so my use of interactive Blackboard features is pared down and I rely on (mostly written) assignments that can be

downloaded and uploaded, rather than those that require sustained connections.

Additionally, these students' writing is often not strong, and I fear I am missing some of their growing understanding of interdisciplinarity due to their problems articulating complex ideas. On the other hand, my primary goal for these students is to make sense of their education (they are at a mid-point, for the most part) and gain control over the choices they are making: focusing on a major (usually business), connecting classroom learning with their work environment, planning a career that makes use of their new degree.

The solution I came across is video: students interview partners, record their conversations, and follow up with a video recording of their own individual reflection of what they learned from their interviews. The finished product is uploaded to YouTube (usually invisible to other YouTube users) and the link shared with me. Students use their phones and laptop or tablets – the added technical challenge of uploading (relatively manageable, with tutorial links provided by me via email or Blackboard) is a nice benefit for students returning to the classroom or looking for new skills and confidence.

The first video project is a trial run – students introduce themselves to me, after watching a short video in which I introduce myself to them. I record my video in my office, and

*Continued on page 13*

## Internships vs. Interviews

*Continued from page 12*

I scan the room around me (book shelves, desk, the coffee maker) to give them a sense of who I am as both a person and an instructor.

Their introductory videos, in turn, are similarly informative: they show children's toys in living rooms, Bible sayings on wall hangings, kitchens at night time, and, once, the interior of a car, illuminated by a dome light – the student had just finished her shift at a plant when she got around to her homework assignment. One student posted, repeatedly, in a voice so quiet it was almost a whisper – when I turned up my laptop's volume to the max, I heard the muffled noises of sleeping children in the background: nap time at the daycare where the student worked. So, the video assignments show me my students in their worlds, which is certainly good for me as I design coursework that tries to be relevant to them.

Two other video assignments are more academic and ask students to connect specific lessons from *Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies* to their work and career experience.

After reading chapter 4, which talks about the fragmentation and specializations of disciplines, an assignment directs students to secure two interview partners who have earned a 2-year or 4-year degree, and ask them questions about coursework, the applicability of classroom learning to the chosen career, and the specific degree and qualifications earned.

Follow-up questions deal with certification, specialization, and other terms introduced in the chapter. I provide a worksheet with the questions (students choose three out of five for each section, shaping the interview to match the person with whom they speak) and instructions about notes and reflections to engage

*One student posted, repeatedly, in a voice so quiet it was almost a whisper – when I turned up my laptop's volume to the max, I heard the muffled noises of sleeping children in the background: nap time at the daycare where the student worked. So, the video assignments show me my students in their worlds, which is certainly good for me as I design coursework that tries to be relevant to them.*

in, so that the entire project is laid out step by step.

A second assignment, later in the term, investigates interdisciplinary work situations. Interview partners are asked about different team members and their responsibilities or areas of expertise, and how they communicate and trouble-shoot across those boundaries.

Already the process of selecting the interview partners creates an opportunity to think through the material they are reading: what constitutes a team, and how does a team work?

Then, the questions probe further: how do different work responsibilities affect perspectives? How can we fully understand the complexity of a problem, and establish common ground to begin to solve it?

Finally, students track their own learning: they are able to describe and analyze the challenges of situations and can begin to imagine how an interdisciplinarian would engage

*Continued on page 14*

### AIS BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2019-20

#### President

James Welch IV

#### Past President

Machiel Keestra

#### President-Elect & Vice President, Development

Jennifer Dellner

#### Vice-President, Relations

Khadijah Miller

#### Financial Director

Scott L. Crabill

#### Director of Information Technology & Executive Director, Alpha Iota Sigma

Marcus Tanner

#### At-Large Members

Kirsi Cheas

Merel van Goch

Allison Upshaw

Evan Widders

#### Conference Liaison

Roslyn Schindler

#### International Liaison

Brian McCormack

#### Section Coordinator

Heidi Upton

#### Editors, Issues in Interdisciplinary Studies

Gretchen Schulz

P. Sven Arvidson

### Integrative Pathways Staff

#### Editor

James Welch IV

#### Assistant Editor

Julia Klimek

#### Contributing Editors

Gretchen Schulz

Heidi Upton

Bianca Vienni Baptista

#### Production Editor

J. C. Casey

### SUBMISSIONS

Authors who wish to submit their proposals for articles or reviews should e-mail queries to Editor-James Welch IV: [james.welch@interdisciplinarystudies.org](mailto:james.welch@interdisciplinarystudies.org). More information on submitting material to *Integrative Pathways* can be found on the AIS Website: [www.interdisciplinarystudies.org](http://www.interdisciplinarystudies.org) under Publications>Integrative Pathways.



**Nov. 6, 2020**

Virtual AIS Mini-Conference  
**Interdisciplinary Responses to the Pandemic:  
An International Forum**

hosted by Sonoma State University

**NEW DATES • AIS 44th Annual Conference  
Nov. 9-12, 2022  
Wicked Problems**

New Call for Proposals: Jan. 2022  
Sonoma State University • California

## INTEGRATIVE PATHWAYS

### Internships vs Interviews

*Continued from page 13*

with them.

The purpose of the course, and these projects, is to build awareness of the relationship between major/discipline/career (and articulate intentionality), but also to create some metacognition. Writing reflective responses to textbook questions, but also planning, conducting, and evaluating interviews further build out a skillset the textbook seeks to introduce and practice.

In this way, while I cannot replicate some of the in-class activities I do with my in-seat traditional stu-

dents, I can provide learning support for similar outcomes. Of course, not having to write all the responses takes some pressure off; engaging friends, family, and co-workers in one's coursework breaks down some boundaries; and playing with phone, camera, and YouTube is just sort of fun.

Student evaluations at the end of the semester (we use the IDEA/Learning Lab forms) show satisfaction with a course that students do not expect to be directly relevant to their careers – and many of them comment specifically on the usefulness of what they learned. And this, of course, is what I am hoping for.

### About AIS

The Association for Interdisciplinary Studies is the U.S.-based international professional association devoted to interdisciplinary teaching (including service learning), research, program administration, and public policy. Interdisciplinarity integrates the insights of knowledge domains to produce a more comprehensive understanding of complex problems, issues, or questions. AIS serves as an organized professional voice and source of information on interdisciplinary approaches and the integration of insights from diverse communities to address complex problems in education and research. Founded in 1979, it is incorporated as a non-profit 501(c)3 educational association in the state of Ohio.

### ON THE WEB:

[ais.interdisciplinarystudies.org](http://ais.interdisciplinarystudies.org)

#### • WHAT'S NEW

Find the latest news about the Association and interdisciplinary studies.

#### • CONFERENCES

Attend the virtual AIS mini-conference on Nov. 6, 2020, hosted by Sonoma State University: **Interdisciplinary Responses to the Pandemic: An International Forum.**

#### • PUBLICATIONS

Find current and past editions of *Integrative Pathways*, *Issues in Interdisciplinary Studies*, and other publications

#### • RESOURCES

Resources include the 2nd edition of *Intentionally Interdisciplinary: Master's Interdisciplinary Program Directory*, SOITL section, peer-reviewed syllabi, and more.

#### • MEMBERSHIPS

It's time to renew your membership for 2020-21.