

## **Principles to Advance Interdisciplinary Education and Research**

### **At the University of Rhode Island**

#### **Ways to use these documents:**

- Post on College and Provost websites
- Enclose with all faculty-related searches– especially for joint appointment and cluster related searches.
- Discuss with faculty in colleges and make available to all faculty, especially those currently involved in interdisciplinary work

#### **Principles**

The University of Rhode Island strongly values both disciplinary and interdisciplinary teaching and research at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The Academic Plan 2010-2015: *Charting our Path to the Future: Toward a Renewed Culture of Achievement* highlights the need for expanded support for interdisciplinary efforts. A task force on interdisciplinary activities and the Joint Committee on Academic Planning endorse efforts to grow these activities, remove existing barriers within processes and structures at the University, and promote supportive processes will advance these important endeavors alongside disciplinary approaches.

This document seeks to address and support efforts to advance interdisciplinary learning and research at both the undergraduate and graduate levels at the University of Rhode Island. It has the support of the Joint Committee on Academic Planning (JCAP).

**These principles should be considered for all new joint appointments and currently existing interdisciplinary endeavors, where they might have some value and potential application**

#### **University-Wide**

- Research or teaching efforts in both undergraduate and graduate work combining more than one academic department are strongly encouraged to have written guidelines, such as a Memorandum of Understanding (for assistance, see related *Templates for Joint Appointments and Checklist for Joint Appointments*) outlining faculty workload, promotion and tenure criteria as they relate differently and specifically to joint and/or interdisciplinary work of faculty, usage of support staff, and the value to each department involved. The faculty involved in joint projects and their respective chairs and deans should review these guidelines and collaboratively come to agreement and articulate in writing the related conditions for any particular joint appointments or interdisciplinary work by a faculty member.
- When an interdisciplinary project needs a chairperson's or dean's approval, chairs and deans of all disciplines represented on the project should indicate approval.
- All departments involved in an interdisciplinary project should share the financial support for research and administrative staff. The financial responsibility of each department should be

included in the Memorandum of Understanding submitted to the department chairs. During the hiring process for joint appointments, candidates should be invited to choose or indicate their potential desired home department. Respectively, deans and/or faculty of that (home) department should be involved in the search and interview process.

- In an effort to increase transparency and encourage interdisciplinary work, the University has adopted metrics for its Academic Plan specific to interdisciplinary learning and research, as has the Academic Program Review Committee in its Chairs' Survey. These metrics include credit hours taught in interdisciplinary programs including dual-title degree programs, secondary emphases, undergraduate majors and minors, and courses which contain significant interdisciplinary emphases; the number of interdisciplinary publications and patents; and interdisciplinarity-related measures from the National Survey of Student Engagement.

### **Faculty**

- Departments are encouraged to facilitate relationships within and outside of the core discipline. Newly appointed and often faculty already currently engaged in interdisciplinary work will benefit from formal mentor relationships within their core and secondary disciplines. Faculty who serve in these formal mentoring capacities should receive recognition at department, college, and/or university levels.
- To encourage collaboration, the University should recognize all co-authorships from different disciplines as full authorships for tenure and promotion purposes.
- Colleges/Deans should recognize the importance of interdisciplinary efforts and related service work in College annual reports and faculty annual, promotion and/or tenure reviews. Departments and Colleges should formally recognize faculty time on interdisciplinary endeavors as equal in importance to time spent on departmental endeavors.
- Credit hours follow the sponsoring (payee) unit/department for the faculty member's teaching. In interdisciplinary efforts this applies proportionally to corresponding teaching support from each college, department, unit as well. In research endeavors, the overhead and credits follow the PI's, whether they are shared or not, those credits and overhead funds get distributed accordingly

### **Graduate Education**

- In recognition of the changing nature of graduate work from exclusively singular and discipline-focused to both mono-disciplinary and interdisciplinary or multi-disciplinary, the University will create an additional graduate fellowship specifically for jointly funding students from different disciplines on a combined project. This fellowship will be open to applicants for any joint project, masters or doctorate, [combining representatives who integrate at least two different disciplines. In addition, the graduate funding awards will also offer the opportunity for submission of joint project proposals.

- The University supports interdisciplinary graduate programs. Departments are encouraged to collaborate to develop rigorous programs for their students, which address current and future interdisciplinary opportunities and challenges. Dual-title degrees are encouraged. Proposed programs will require review and approval by the departments and colleges involved in offering the interdisciplinary program, as well as by the Graduate School, Faculty Senate, and Board of Higher Education. All approved dual-title degrees will be included on official transcripts and diplomas.
  - All departments concerned will financially support dual-title and secondary concentration graduate candidates. A Memorandum of Understanding must be submitted to the Graduate School detailing the percentage of funding for which each department is responsible; the terms of the funding including academic expectations and renewability; program of study; and work load assignments including teaching and research responsibilities.
  - Dual-title and secondary emphasis graduate programs should require graduate student program committees comprised of graduate faculty from the disciplines participating in the interdisciplinary program as internal committee members, chaired by one major professor from one of the participating disciplines. Outside committee members must come from outside of the disciplines comprising the interdisciplinary program.
- Where applicable departments are encouraged to develop courses or modules specific to training students in interdisciplinary collaboration.

### **Interdisciplinary Research**

- The University has provided some space for collaborative work. Proposals for new spaces and re-allocation of existing space to foster conversations, connections, joint work, and creative thinking will be considered through the established channels.
- The University encourages faculty and staff to seek interdisciplinary funding opportunities. To support faculty and staff in their efforts to obtain funding, the University encourages departments to host grant writing workshops open to all related disciplines. Departments that host workshops may receive additional financial or administrative support for this work, and faculty who participate in key roles may add these professional activities to their tenure and promotion portfolios.

\*These recommended guidelines were informed by:

*Impact of Transformative Interdisciplinary Research and Graduate Education on Academic Institutions*, May 2008 Workshop Report. As sponsored by NSF, Education of Human Resources Directorate, Division of Graduation Education, Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship (IGERT) Program

\*These recommended guidelines were endorsed by the University of Rhode Island Joint Committee on Academic Planning, March 2013

\*\*SEE ALSO: *URI Recommended Guidelines and Practices for Joint Appointments* and *Checklist for Joint Appointments*