

2019-20 Strategic Plan

Integrated Studies Department

Mission statement

“[Integrated Studies] is a process of answering a question, solving a problem, or addressing a topic that is too broad or complex to be dealt with adequately by a single discipline, and draws on the disciplines with the goal of integrating their insights to construct a more comprehensive understanding.” (Repko & Szostak, *Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies*, 2014) Topics courses in Integrated Studies model this process for students, usually on the basis of the professor’s ongoing research. In the two capstone courses, through one-on-one mentoring by an IS professor enhanced by mentoring from professors from each disciplinary emphasis, students produce an interdisciplinary senior thesis. Graduates from our department have used their hands-on experience with the thesis to secure employment in fields related to the thesis, to start businesses, and to go on to graduate and professional programs (medical school, law school, masters in business administration, social work, public administration, etc.)

Special program characteristics:

- Students engage in Interdisciplinary work that culminates in a rigorous senior thesis or project aimed to help students transition to graduate/professional school or toward careers.
- Students receive one-on-one mentoring from multiple faculty members throughout the senior thesis process.
- Students work closely with departmental academic advisors to meet student-centered objectives set out in an advising syllabus.
- Students completing the Integrated Studies degree have developed skills in thinking, writing, speaking, problem solving, collaborative work, gathering and analyzing data, and have done so on the foundation of solid (but not exhaustive) disciplinary emphases.
- Faculty do campus-wide interdisciplinary work that includes team teaching and collaborative projects across disciplines.

Objectives

Objective Name: Program Rigor

Objective (1): Increase and Demonstrate Program Rigor

Supported UVU Objectives:

Achieve 3 (primary): UVU prepares students for success in their subsequent learning, professional, and civic pursuits.

Engage 1: UVU faculty, staff, and students practice excellent, engaged teaching and learning activities as a community of scholars, creators, and practitioners.

Supported UVU Objective Rationale: Increasing and demonstrating program rigor meets the UVU objectives by ensuring continuous quality improvement measured at the senior thesis level via an external review. A community and culture of scholarship is developed as students are encouraged to engage in competitive academic experiences by participating in conferences such as NCUR and UCUR, submitting work to campus journals, engaging in collaborative research projects, etc. Increasing and demonstrating the program’s rigor ensures that Integrated Studies remains a high-quality program that serves the needs of a diverse and dedicated student population. Graduation outcomes are measured both in terms of

Graduate/Professional School Acceptance rates and Employment data. Exemplary senior Capstone work is highlighted each Spring.

Objective Name: Increase Program Headcount

Objective (2): Increase matriculation so headcount remains above 100 during the low-point that occurs after Spring graduation.

Supported UVU Objectives:

Include 2 (primary): UVU provides accessible, equitable, and culturally diverse learning experiences and resources for students of all backgrounds, including those historically underrepresented in higher education.

Include 1: UVU integrates educational opportunities appropriate to both community colleges and universities.

Supported UVU Objective Rationale: Increasing program headcount meets the UVU objective of inclusivity. Strategies are being employed to create additional emphases (curricular options) for students to pursue via Integrated Studies – including emphases in trades and technical areas. The program admissions essay and application are being removed as well, clearing barriers to program admittance.

Objective Name: Ongoing Thesis & Curriculum Improvement

Objective (3): Faculty & staff of the Integrated Studies program incorporate theory and best practices to ensure that the curriculum is interdisciplinary and helps students to successfully transition toward post-graduation goals. Fall 2019 meetings will center on the topic of Senior Thesis/Capstone improvements.

Supported UVU Objectives:

Engage 1 (primary):

UVU faculty, staff, and students practice excellent, engaged teaching and learning activities as a community of scholars, creators, and practitioners.

Engage 3:

UVU employees demonstrate a commitment to student success, professionalism, ethics, and accountability.

Supported UVU Objective Rationale: Ongoing thesis and curriculum improvement is at the very heart of outstanding teaching. The continuous self-review process that faculty undergo while teaching courses ensures that students receive a high-quality experience. One of the objectives identified by faculty is that Integrated Studies courses will nourish students' "intellectual curiosity" in an interdisciplinary way, instilling in students an attitude of lifelong learning. This objective is closely connected to operating ethically and effectively; faculty and staff feel accountable for providing a program informed by research on interdisciplinary theory and best teaching and advising practices.

Assessment Indicators

Assessment Indicator Name: 1 Year Retention Measure

Assessment Indicator: The number of students who have been retained by (or graduated from) the program within the last 12-month period will be gathered.

Assessed Objective (2): Increase Program Headcount

Rationale: This measurement provides an indication of how often students are unable to complete our program or choose to transfer to other programs. Increasing this number will result in fewer students leaving the program.

Threshold of Objective Achievement: The rate of retention should be equal to or greater than the level at the previous year: 55.7% in 2016-2017

Data Year: 2017-2018

Result: The one-year retention rate for 2017-2018 is 69.4%

Data Year: 2018-2019

Result: The one-year retention rate for 2018-2019 is 78.13% (also of note is that almost all student who were not retained by our definition are still at UVU pursuing other programs)

Assessment Indicator Name: Graduate Survey Report

Assessment Indicator: A program graduate survey is provided to Integrated Studies students who are graduating in the Fall or Spring. Discussion about incorporating the survey into curriculum to increase the response rate may take place in the future. The survey serves two functions: 1) to provide anonymous student feedback about the quality and experience of the program and 2) to give students an opportunity to reflect on their experience in the program and make a smooth transition to success after graduation.

Assessed Objective: Ongoing Thesis & Curriculum Improvement (Obj. 3)

Rationale: The report on the graduate survey provides both qualitative and quantitative measures of the student experience in the program *as reported by students*. This data will take various forms, but the substance of the graduate survey seeks to measure the effectiveness of the program's advising, teaching, curriculum, and community elements.

Threshold of Objective Achievement: Because this metric is complex and consists of many data points as well as qualitative feedback, the best threshold of objective achievement is having 1 or more program changes that were catalyzed by the feedback provided from the report.

Data Year: 2018-2019

Results: Initial success of Pilot survey from 2017-2018 has led to the dept. making a formal curriculum change which will mandate the Survey as a graduation requirement for all Integrated Studies students in the BA/BS program. The 2018-19 commitment of implementing curriculum change to require exit survey had been completed, changes go in to effect Fall 2020; program will work with UVU Data Academy in 2019-2020 to update and improve the survey instrument.

Assessment Indicator Name: Post-Graduate Employment and Graduate School Admission Data

Assessment Indicator: Strategies for collecting data about student success after graduation are in place and reports are generated on a 5-year cycle. These data come in two varieties: graduate school acceptance/completion as well as career trajectories, compiled into a single report.

Assessed Objective: Program Rigor (1) & Increase Program Headcount (2)

Data Year: 2019-2029

Data Gathering In Progress (Latest report available at: <https://www.uvu.edu/is/assessment.html>)

Assessment Indicator Name: Senior Thesis External Evaluator Report

Assessment Indicator: Every 5 years, the Integrated Studies Program invites an external evaluator to assess the quality of student senior thesis work. The evaluator reviews a randomly-generated sample of thesis work spanning the 5-year period in question and provides commendations and recommendations, which are used for program improvement.

Assessed Objective: Ongoing Thesis & Curriculum Improvement (Obj. 3)

Rationale: The feedback provided by the external evaluator is used to inform faculty decisions about how to teach core Integrated Studies courses, particularly the Capstone courses (IS 4980 & IS 4990), but also the IS 300R/350R topics courses.

The senior thesis is a rigorous requirement (30-60 pages, generally, and orally defended before a

committee) which challenges students to solve complex problems in innovative ways.

Threshold of Objective Achievement: Because the thesis evaluation is qualitative, a qualitative threshold of success must be used. Success is achieved if the evaluator indicates that the overall quality of the thesis work has improved or, if the quality has not improved, that the program takes steps to implement the evaluator's recommendations for improvement.

Data Year 2017-2022

Data Gathering still in progress. Latest report from 2013-2016 is available here:

<https://uvu.app.box.com/s/qjtgp72uc10yeh5ss8eeaip5pf6sv6ih> .

Assessment Indicator Name: Active Student Headcount

Assessment Indicator: The advisors for the program maintain an up-to-date database of students actively pursuing the program. The number of students on this report before and after graduation will be recorded and presented here to give indicators of both high and low points in program headcount.

Assessed Objective: Increase Program Headcount (2)

Rationale: This indicator measures the assessed objective directly, there is no clearer way of determining if the goal is being met.

Threshold of Objective Achievement: Low-point headcount exceeds 100 students.

Data Year: 2018-2019

Active Students 9.16.2019 = 61