

## **Provost's Interdisciplinary Working Group Report on Academic Year 2018 Activities**

The Interdisciplinary Working Group (IDWG) was convened by Provost John Coatsworth in 2017 for the purpose of helping to find practical ways to tackle the difficulties of interdisciplinary research and education in order to help centers, institutes, and the faculty affiliated with them to thrive at Columbia.

### ***IDWG Members:***

- John H. Coatsworth, Provost
- Melissa Begg, Vice Provost for Academic Programs
- Matthew Connelly, Co-Director, Institute for Social and Economic Research and Policy (ISERP)
- Patricia J. Culligan, Associate Director, Data Science Institute
- Thomas DiPrete, Co-Director, Institute for Social and Economic Research and Policy (ISERP)
- Carol Gluck, Chair, Committee on Global Thought
- Carol Mason, Chair of Interschool Planning, Zuckerman Mind Brain Behavior Institute
- Justin Pearlman, Chief of Staff, Office of the Provost
- Stephanie Pfirman, Chair, Earth Institute Faculty Development Committee
- Muredach Reilly, Director, Irving Institute for Clinical and Translational Research
- H. Blair Simpson, Vice Chair of Research, Department of Psychiatry
- Thomas N. Theis, Executive Director, Columbia Nano Initiative
- Debra J. Wolgemuth, Associate Director for Research, Institute of Human Nutrition

### ***Meeting Dates:***

- June 13, 2017
- September 27, 2017
- December 4, 2017
- January 18, 2018
- February 22, 2018
- May 31, 2018

At its first meeting in June 2017, the ad hoc group proposed and discussed possible areas of work across a large number of topic areas and discussed the importance of setting benchmarks and demonstrating accomplishments. Rather than starting with the thornier topics, it was agreed that it would be best to begin by focusing on low-hanging fruit. Coatsworth concluded the meeting by asking each IDWG member to email him over the summer with a list of “annoyances,” highlighting one or two items that could be addressed quickly, along with suggestions for how to approach the problem.

At the second meeting in September 2017, Coatsworth shared that several main themes emerged from the group's feedback over the summer. A summary was shared with the group. The meeting's discussion focused on crafting an agenda for IDWG's work that could be accomplished over the academic year. The target action areas follow here:

1. Review tenure guidelines and practices.
2. Develop guidelines and recommended practices for co-teaching, cross-listing, and cross-registration of courses.
3. Enhance communications and “in-reach” efforts.

4. Leverage existing internal resources.
5. Consider creating additional pilot programs.
6. Develop surveys of University leaders and faculty to identify barriers to interdisciplinary work.
7. Set milestones and evaluate progress.

### ***DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FIRST YEAR (June 2017 through May 2018)***

With respect to tenure guidelines and practices:

- IDWG members were invited to meet with Chris Brown in December 2017 for an in-depth discussion about policies and processes for faculty appointments and promotions, including tenure guidelines and practices, adjunct and lecturer appointments, and joint appointments.
- Discussions have been ongoing over the spring with Art Palmer, Interim Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, and the members of TRAC about revisions to the referee letters that go out for tenure packages. The final revised language will become part of the tenure review letter template during the coming year. The new template letter will be shared with School deans and their vice deans responsible for faculty affairs.

With respect to co-teaching, cross-listing, and cross-registration of courses:

- Cross-registration of courses was discussed at the February 12, 2018 meeting of the Education Deans, a group of education leaders from all 16 of Columbia's schools that is regularly convened by the Office of the Vice Provost for Academic Programs. There was common agreement that cross-registration is a challenge for students. They noted that some courses are in exceptionally high demand, whereas others are not oversubscribed and it is easier for students from outside the home school or department to enroll in them. In May 2018, Education Deans were surveyed about obstacles to cross-registration. They suggested a number of steps to be discussed with the IDWG.
- Colleagues in the Office of the Vice Provost for Academic Programs met with Barry Kane, University Registrar, on March 7, 2018, to discuss barriers to cross-registration. A number of logistical, access, and calendar-related obstacles were discussed. We agreed that we would start by focusing on a modern, internet-based system for cross-registration to eliminate the need for students to travel from one school to another to get physical signatures on cross-registration documents. In addition, work has begun to produce a guidance document with step-by-step instructions on how to most effectively and efficiently create a cross-listed course. (Special thanks to Carol Gluck for providing examples of cross-registration challenges.)

With respect to communications, in-reach efforts, and leveraging available resources:

- On January 18, 2018, IDWG met with Mike Purdy, Executive Vice President for Research, and Adrian Hill, Executive Director for University Research Planning and Development, for a discussion of research infrastructure and resources for interdisciplinary scholarship. Purdy shared that the OEVP website lists a host of funding opportunities and helpful resources. The group discussed possible action areas, including expanding funding support, creating an interdisciplinary response team, and expanding administrative support for grant applications.
- The group had a special meeting on February 22, 2018, to discuss opportunities and challenges in interdisciplinary research and education with Cathy Davidson, a guest speaker at the 2018 CTL Celebration of Teaching and Learning Symposium. In 1998 Dr. Davidson became the first full-time Vice Provost for Interdisciplinary Studies at Duke University (and the first in the nation). She is now Founding Director of the Futures Initiative and Distinguished Professor in the PhD

Program in English at the Graduate Center, CUNY. She provided guidance on how best to incentivize interdisciplinary research and teaching at academic institutions.

With respect to pilot programs:

- A draft RFP for a new pilot seed grant program for Interdisciplinary Course Development, prepared in response to IDWG’s recommendation regarding interdisciplinary teaching, was distributed at the group’s January meeting and was circulated via email in February. The proposed pilot program will make up to five awards of \$20,000 each to support teams of faculty members from different departments or schools to collaborate on the development and teaching of undergraduate or graduate courses.

With respect to surveys of University leaders and faculty:

- Draft survey questions were distributed at the September meeting and circulated via email in October, inviting comments and edits. (Special thanks to Stephanie Pfirman for her contributions to the draft survey.)
- Colleagues in the Office of the Vice Provost for Academic Programs met with Adrian Hill on October 16, 2017, to discuss hiring priorities and information sharing surveys of selected department chairs that she is spearheading. It was agreed that this is a valuable effort and is quite distinct from the faculty survey goals being discussed by IDWG.

**TIMELINE AND NEXT STEPS**

<b>Action Item:</b>	<b>Target Deadline:</b>
Finalize the referee letter with TRAC.	DONE
Identify funds and draft an interdisciplinary teaching RFP	DONE
Finalize survey questions for university-wide survey	DONE
Survey Education Deans regarding obstacles to cross registration	IN PROGRESS
Produce guidance document with instructions on creating a cross-listed course	IN PROGRESS
Develop website content to highlight interdisciplinary success stories and funding opportunities in collaboration with Mike Purdy’s office	August 2018
Specify timing and target audience for university-wide survey consultation with the University Senate	October 2018
Develop common lists of courses in high demand across schools and work with Education Deans to develop protocols around access	December 2018
Work with the Registrar to develop an on-line system for cross-registration that works for all/nearly all schools at Columbia	June 2019