

OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOW ENROLLED UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

MIAMI UNIVERSITY

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INTRODUCTION

Miami University is facing unprecedented fiscal, societal and political challenges that are prompting very difficult decisions about our curriculum. Tragically, we no longer have the resources to support the current portfolio of academic programs, particularly our lowest-enrolled degree programs or majors.

We know that this is heart-breaking news given that the faculty involved in these programs have worked heroically through the considerable challenges of the COVID pandemic and then through the Academic Program Evaluation, Improvement & Prioritization (APEIP) project to enact thoughtful and creative strategies for improvement. Put bluntly, we want you to know that these problems are not your fault. They are part of a larger troubling higher education landscape.

However, unlike other institutions where programs are simply eliminated by central administration or the Board of Trustees, we must advance a *new* vision for academic affairs that continues to promote liberal arts outcomes as central to its mission yet does so in a much more collaborative way.

Going forward, our departments and divisions *must* lean on one another to promote high quality and innovative learning experiences for our students. This new vision will demand new interdisciplinary, cross-departmental collaborations such as: shared courses; co-designed degree programs/majors, new or revitalized concentrations, certificates and minors; strategic leveraging of the new Miami Plan and other important programs (e.g., the Honors College or Honors Program, winter term offerings, education abroad workshops).

As Provost, I will work hard to facilitate and recognize the kinds of purposeful collaborations that this new vision will require, including finding new ways to showcase minors, concentrations and Miami Plan contributions. I will work with support units to break down barriers and siloes to forge new connections and experimentation across departments and divisions, and I will insist that chairs and deans take into consideration in their performance reviews the extra labor that this kind of pivoting will require.

It is also important that faculty in these programs work with their chair and dean to formulate a new path for themselves. Below are some possible options to consider.

#1) DEVELOP, REVISE OR FOCUS GREATER ENERGY ON A MINOR OR CERTIFICATE PROGRAM.

With your colleagues, brainstorm ideas for new courses, smaller or revitalized programs that will advance important learning outcomes and generate student interest. Collaborate with key offices (Office of Admission, Center for Career Services, Office of Provost) to identify themes and emphases that will more likely attract student interest.

#2) PROPOSE AND OFFER CREATIVE AND EXCITING NEW COURSES OR OTHER LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES.

Another option is to propose a cluster of Signature Inquiry courses on pioneering and innovative topics. The Miami Plan Innovation Lab has support and resources to help you create new interdisciplinary courses with colleagues in and outside your department. Or, consider collaborating with the Honors College to participate in their new curricular opportunities. Perhaps some exciting international workshops or winter term offerings would be appealing.

Invite a member of Liberal Education Council, the Honors College or Education Abroad to provide insights into what types of courses and experiences would have a high chance of success.

#3) COMBINE STAND-ALONE MAJORS INTO ONE MAJOR WITH MULTIPLE CONCENTRATIONS.

Could you consider collaborating with faculty in another similar program to develop one major with multiple concentrations or pathways? This type of program is typically fully housed in one department but could also be a major that draws concentrations from two or more departments. The major often includes one or more core courses (e.g., introduction to the major, methods course, career development course, or capstone) with requirements for distinct concentrations that relate to overall topic of the major.

Examples: Miami's B.A. East Asian Languages & Cultures has several concentrations in Japan and China; our B.S. Education, Integrated Science Education also has multiple concentrations. See also: Ohio State's [B.A. World Literatures](#) or UC San Diego's [B.A. World Literature & Culture](#); Columbia's [Comparative Literature & Society Major](#)

#4) COLLABORATE WITH OTHER DEPARTMENTS ON A CROSS-DIVISIONAL AND CROSS-DEPARTMENTAL "SUPER" MAJOR OR DEGREE PROGRAM.

- A cross-departmental major offers programs an opportunity to explain the relevance of their courses and faculty expertise in a new context by collaborating with other programs.
- With 50-60+ credit hours, this collaborative "super" major can offer students a depth of experience that an individual major, especially in the humanities, typically cannot due to staffing and other constraints.
- Cross-departmental majors will be most successful when
 - they are designed to speak to students' career aspirations;
 - participating programs are open to pivoting specific courses as needed.
- There are various models for how a program can participate.

Below are two possible models:

1. **Blended Program** is fully housed in and administered by one department but the program requirements "borrow" some core courses from another department. Typically, the content of the program is cross-disciplinary meaning that it is typically somewhat skewed toward the discipline(s) in the home department yet also requires some in-depth disciplinary knowledge or skills represented by a different department (e.g., more than just some related hours or pick lists from other departments). Blended programs focus on interdisciplinary themes, problems or questions that demand in-depth study of two or more disciplines. For example, are there existing programs that could benefit from some core courses with enhanced humanities outcomes?

Example: Arts Management & Arts Entrepreneurship program requires a set of core courses offered in College of Creative Arts, and, additionally, students are required to take 15 credits of courses in the Farmer School of Business.

2. **Joint (Fully Integrated) Program** is a single program that focuses on an interdisciplinary field of study, involves an integrated curriculum and leads to a single joint degree. It draws heavily from multiple disciplines represented in at least two departments and is also coordinated and offered jointly by two or more academic divisions. All aspects of the program are jointly administered by the departments and divisions involved. All of the involved divisions are listed on the diploma.

Example: An example could be a bachelor's program in cybersecurity technology, policy and management that could be administered through a range of departments across multiple divisions. Miami currently does not have any fully integrated joint programs. See University of Notre Dame's [B.A. Philosophy, Science & Mathematics](#); Northeastern University's [Politics, Philosophy & Economics](#) major; Stanford University's [Comparative Studies in Race & Ethnicity](#); University of Iowa's [Ethics & Public Policy](#) major; University of Amsterdam's [Global Arts, Culture & Politics](#).

BENEFITS OF CROSS-DEPT PROGRAMS

Purposeful and high-quality cross-divisional and cross-departmental degree programs can advance these goals:

- Foster deeper collaborations among departments across divisions and disrupts siloed thinking;
- Promote innovative, interdisciplinary programs;
- Be more cost effective since cross-divisional and cross-departmental programs leverage the strengths of other departments rather than trying to compete with them;
- Make Miami distinct, if we align the programs with major industry needs. Note: few institutions do this at scale;
- Galvanize interdisciplinary research and external funding since it will bring faculty from different fields together;
- Reduce the need for cross-listing courses and co-majors.

CHALLENGES OF CROSS-DEPT PROGRAMS

Cross-divisional and cross-departmental programs have the following possible challenges:

- Advance pioneering, out-of-box thinking and thus may require adjustments to current policies, procedures and systems
- Require a culture shift away from the siloed mentality that pushes people to think only of generating revenue for their own division (RCM mindset).
- May require additional diligence to ensure quality outcomes
- Could raise questions relating to differences across divisions (faculty workload, salaries, professional development funds)
- Require ongoing cross-divisional and cross-departmental negotiation and oversight
- Pose additional problems when the two divisions are on different campuses or have differing tuition rates
- Offer possibility of misuse, including creating a cross-departmental and cross-divisional program in an effort to "rescue" a poorly enrolled existing program.

HOW TO GET STARTED ON A CROSS-DEPARTMENTAL PROGRAM

Reach out to your dean's office and the Office of the Provost if you have ideas or questions.

We are here to help support you.

Not only do we have guidelines, including an MoU template, but we are here to brainstorm ideas, help break down barriers, and identify new ways to recognize your efforts.