

**INTERDISCIPLINARY
EDUCATION & RESEARCH AT UAF:
PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES**

Report of Faculty Senate Task Force

November, 2013

TASK FORCE MEMBERS

- Craig Gerlach, Center for Cross Cultural and Indigenous Studies; Institute of Arctic Biology
- Gary Kofinas, Dept. of Humans and the Environment and Institute of Arctic Biology
- Raymond J. Barnhardt, Alaska Native Knowledge Network, Center for Cross Cultural and Indigenous Studies
- Lawrence K. Duffy, Institute of Arctic Biology, Chemistry and Biochemistry
- Ginny Eckert, Fisheries and Ocean Sciences
- Joshua Greenberg, Humans and the Environment, School of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences
- Gary Jacobsen, Secondary Education Dept
- Chanda Meek, Political Science Dept
- Silke Schiewer, Civil and Environmental Engineering, Engineering and Mines

Interdisciplinary

“Transdisciplinary”, “multi-disciplinary”, and “pan-disciplinary”

- *“A mode of research [or learning] undertaken by teams or individuals that integrates information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts, and/or theories from two or more disciplines or bodies of specialized knowledge to advance fundamental understanding or to solve problems whose solutions are beyond the scope of a single discipline or area of research practice.”*

National Academy of Science (2004)

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Reasons for interdisciplinary at UAF

- Being relevant to societal problems; making a link with the public and policy makers (e.g., AK Legislature)
- Educating the “New Public Intellectual”
- Funding requirements for interdisciplinary approaches
- Poised to become a world leader in interdisciplinary research & education
- Growing student demand

Charge of Task Force

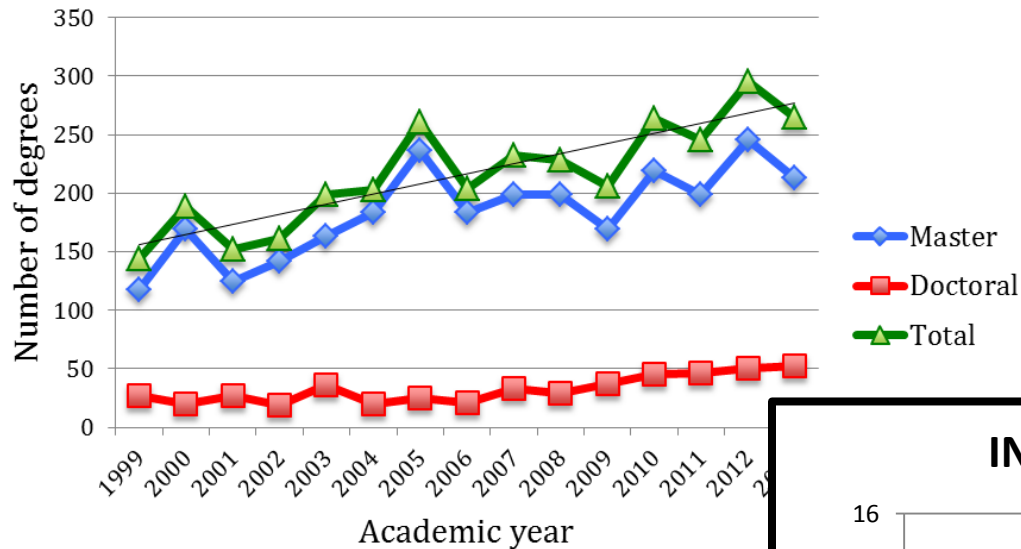
- How do we create an institutional environment and “culture” that will help rather than hinder the progress of interdisciplinary research and education?
 - Identify problems, barriers, and constraints
 - Highlight efforts at UAF
 - Presents models of successful interdisciplinary research and education at other institutions
 - Make recommendations for change at UAF

Lots to build on!

- Long history of interdisciplinary research and education at UAF
- Several outstanding interdisciplinary education & research programs
- Top-level administration is supportive
- Growing student interest

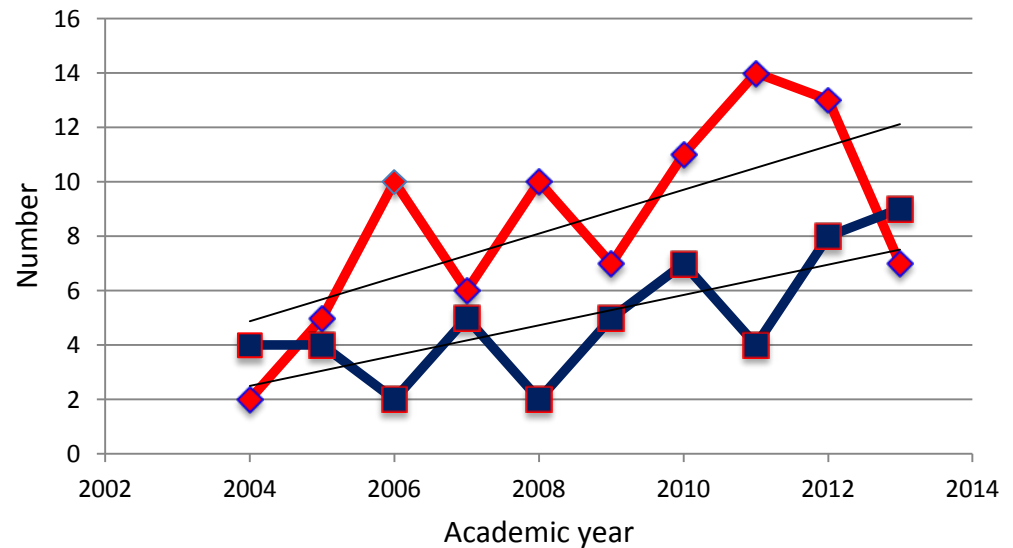
INDS Education / degree programs

Graduate degrees awarded by academic year



INDS PhDs were 22% of all awarded in 2012

INDS PhDs and MA/Ss awarded



UAF examples

- Honors Program / special courses
- Indigenous Studies
- The Resilience and Adaptation Program
- SNRAS+SOM PhD in NR and Sustainability
- WERC, SNAP, BNZ LTER, IARC, CGC, EPSCoR, and. . .

Examples

- University of Hawai`i Manoa's Interdisciplinary Cluster Hires Model at the
- Academy for Advanced *Interdisciplinary* Studies at Peking University
- “The New American University”: Research University as Knowledge Enterprise at Arizona State University
- The Stockholm Resilience Centre

Barriers and constraints

Institutional & Administrative Level

- Limited institutional frameworks;
- Students with co-advisors from different units are only counted for “primary” unit.
- Serving on INDS committees is discouraged by some department heads or deans
- Academic unit revenue distribution based on outdated statewide accounting system;
- Overhead from grants by faculty with joint appointments is sometimes disputed

Barriers and constraints

Faculty Level

- Disincentives for faculty engaging in interdisciplinary scholarship
- Promotion files evaluated primarily by “rank and file” disciplinarians from home unit;
- Cross-listed classes count for the departments of students, irrespective of instructor’s department

Barriers and constraints

Student Level

- Limited funding for INDS graduate students;
- The privileging of disciplinary students over INDS graduate students by some for departmental funding support;
- Requirement that INDS degree applicants have fully formed research proposals before being accepted

A start at recommendations...

- Shape “culture” to reward efforts
 - (Chancellor, Provost, administration)
- Review tenure and promotion process
 - (Provost, Deans, Faculty Senate)
- Provide more INDS student funding
 - (Deans, Dept Heads)
- Promote “cluster hires” and shared faculty workloads,
 - (Deans and Directors)
- Include faculty from both appointment areas (not just the academic home) on T&P committees
 - (Deans and faculty).
- Full thesis proposal requirement for acceptance to INDS degree program after student is accepted
 - (Dean of Grad Studies; curriculum committees).
- Establish a “Faculty of INDS Graduate Studies”
 - (Provost and Dean of Grad Studies)

Where to?

- How do we move from barriers to action?
 - Massive reorganization of units?
- Who is responsible for making each recommendation happen?
 - A Chancellor's Task Force? A Town Hall?
- What is the timeline for specific tasks?
 - Some immediate; some long term