

2003

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## Recommended Citation

"Apollo Meets Dionysus: Interdisciplinarity in Long-standing Interdisciplinary Programs," with William Newell (Wayne State University), James Hall (University of Alabama), Steven Hutkins (New York University), Eric McGuckin (Sonoma State University), and Karen Oates (George Mason University). *Issues in Integrative Studies: an Interdisciplinary Journal* 21 (2003 [published August, 2004]), 9-42.

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ISSUES IN INTEGRATIVE STUDIES  
No. 21, pp.9-42 (2003)

**APOLLO MEETS  
DIONYSIUS**  
**Interdisciplinarity in  
Long-standing Interdisciplinary Programs**

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**Abstract:** At the invitation of the AIS Board of Directors, representatives of several long-standing interdisciplinary programs gathered on October 9, 2003, to participate in back-to-back panel discussions at the 25<sup>th</sup> AIS conference. Following months of email exchanges prior to the conference, the panel moved quickly into an exploration of the common issues faced by such programs. Many, the panel discovered, can be examined fruitfully by extending Nietzsche's distinction between the Apollonian and Dionysian, applied by him to tragedy, to an overview of experimental, interdisciplinary programs. In the panel discussion, it became apparent that this distinction could serve as a useful metaphorical lens through which to view many of the tensions that shaped the structures and practices of the programs represented. Since those structures and practices, in turn, influenced how faculty members and students each came to understand the interdisciplinary approach to education common to these programs, the panelists came to appreciate that the insights gained from viewing interdisciplinary education as an outcome of Apollonian-Dionysian tension are of more than passing or parochial interest.

## Introduction

In "The Birth of Tragedy," Friedrich Nietzsche (1956) postulated an extended metaphor based on the dichotomy between the Apollonian and Dionysian approaches to understanding. That metaphor remains as fresh today, applied to enlarged notions of interdisciplinarity, as it was 140 years earlier when applied to Greek tragedy, myth, ritual, and psychology. Nietzsche wrote: "The two creative tendencies developed alongside each other, usually in fierce opposition ... until at last ... the pair accepted the yoke of marriage and, in this condition, begot Attic tragedy, which exhibits the salient features of both parents" (p. 19). The Apollonian tendency, Nietzsche argued, is characterized by "an immediate apprehension of form, all shapes speak to us directly, nothing seems indifferent or redundant" (p. 20) in which the Apollonian "observes exactly and enjoys his observations, for it is by these images that he interprets life" (p. 20-21). Apollo was the "god of light" who imposed "a discreet limitation, a freedom from all extravagant urges" (p. 21). The Dionysian tendency, on the other hand, is to "rapture, whose closest analogy is furnished by physical intoxication ... so stirred, the individual forgets himself completely" (p. 22). In that rapture, "Not only does the bond between man and man come to be forged once more by the magic of the Dionysiac rite, but nature itself, long alienated or subjugated, rises again to celebrate the reconciliation with her prodigal son, man" (p. 23). These two tendencies come together in the ancient Greek and the modern-day interdisciplinarian alike: "his Apollonian consciousness was but a thin veil hiding from him the whole Dionysiac realm" (p. 28). Yet, we should not be misled, Nietzsche warned us, by the fact that Apollo was "one god among many, making no claim to a privileged position": "The same drive that found its most complete represen-

tation in Apollo generated the whole Olympian world, and in this sense we may consider Apollo the father of that world” (p. 28).

The Apollonian-Dionysian tension manifests itself in many long-standing interdisciplinary programs and helps shape their interdisciplinary practice. The discussions of several individual interdisciplinary programs that follow support that contention. But that tension symbolizes as well as characterizes—that is, there are other related tensions that inform the interdisciplinarity of these programs as well. All of these tensions interact to enlarge the notion of interdisciplinarity that develops over time in interdisciplinary programs. The unpacking of that enlarged notion is the challenge undertaken in this article.

In “Advancing Interdisciplinary Studies,” Klein and Newell (1997) set out the consensus definition of interdisciplinarity: “interdisciplinary studies may be defined as 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 or profession...IDS draws on disciplinary perspectives and integrates their insights through construction of a more comprehensive perspective” (pp. 393-394). While that bare-bones definition can be useful in providing initial guidance to faculty members and students new to interdisciplinary studies, it fails to capture the richness that characterizes long-standing interdisciplinary programs. At the same time, if ignored, there is a danger that these programs can lose sight of the essence of interdisciplinarity and hence their distinctive mission in American higher education.

The Apollonian-Dionysian tension probably emerged from the experimental-college approach to interdisciplinary studies that characterizes the programs represented in this article, but it also has important implications for how they conceived and implemented interdisciplinarity. In addition, we have identified several other tensions within these programs, derivative of the Apollonian-Dionysian dichotomy, that have shaped their distinctive approach to interdisciplinarity:

1. Defining the role of the disciplines in interdisciplinary study underlies both (a) the fundamental tension that exists between mainstream and radical interdisciplinarians regarding the legitimacy of disciplines; and (b) the more recent tension that has developed between modernists and post-modernists (e.g., feminists, post-colonialists, critical theorists, cultural theorists) regarding the relevance of the disciplines. After all, older faculty members came to interdisciplinary study when disciplinary hegemony was rarely

questioned. Younger faculty members, on the other hand, come to it at a time when the disciplines themselves are under attack, at a time when the very nature of knowledge is being radically rethought and the “blurring, cracking, and crossing” of disciplines that Julie Klein (1993) refers to has obscured disciplinary boundaries and thus interdisciplinarity itself, grounded as it is in the disciplines.

2. Tension between flexibility and rigor also manifests itself in student-designed concentrations as well as in faculty-designed approaches to interdisciplinary courses. Does or must the flexibility inherent in interdisciplinarity translate as lack of discipline (i.e., rigor or depth)? Cannot rigor apply to synthesis as well as analysis, to strong-sense as well as weak-sense critical thinking, to diverse as well as limited methodologies, to social justice as well as social order, to service learning as well as book learning? One response to this issue has been that after years of doing interdisciplinarity but not talking about it, implicitly making it up as we went along or maybe just presuming it, there is movement toward explicit training in interdisciplinarity, for precision and rigor in thinking, as well as explaining the interdisciplinary major and the self-designed interdisciplinary concentration.
3. And there is a tension between prospective and retrospective conceptions of interdisciplinarity. Must integration be intentional, or is it better and more realistically realized as post hoc rationalization, a retrospective construction of and reflection on the journey?
4. Finally, there is a tension between a narrow, discipline-based conception of the interdisciplinary process, and a broader, a-disciplinary conception that embraces the entire learning process, one that also includes a democratic decision-making process.

Here is how those tensions have played out in several long-standing interdisciplinary programs.

## Fairhaven College, Western Washington University

Fairhaven College of Western Washington University, founded in 1967, was created as an innovative, interdisciplinary, liberal arts laboratory for student-centered, collaborative teaching and learning, the first of what was projected to be a series of “cluster colleges” designed to break the “multiversity” into smaller, more human, less impersonal units. From the beginning, Apollonians and Dionysians tugged at each other in this creative, educational experiment. By forming a new community, a new communal dance of learning, a kind of cult allegiance and spiritual expectation arose in the Fairhaven precinct; we were open to the ecstasy of understanding, and distinctive, so we thought, in our ability to “lead out” the capacities and visions of each student. At the same time, it was expected that integration, a larger vision, and a more comprehensive sense of order should and would rise from the community, and the forms necessary to guide its achievement would find their way to us. If we had the courage to ignore the tight constraints of academic disciplines, and the willingness to tackle real-world problems, methodologies of interdisciplinarity would arise as if they were emanations of the dark, apparently bottomless, beautifully-planted little pond which graced the Fairhaven quadrangle’s courtyard—surely a grotto of Apollo. With Apollo’s guidance, rigor, and accessibility would inform our learning and enable us, through those qualities, to share them with others.

After a few years, Fairhaven’s program came to be embodied in a core program and a system to support students in devising “concentrations”—that is, interdisciplinary majors they designed themselves with a team of faculty (like a mini Ph.D. committee). Though students could still elect to satisfy the requirements of a conventional major, approximately 85% chose to “concentrate,” thereby committing themselves to an interdisciplinary degree. Thus, the structure aimed to synthesize the Dionysian/Apollonian tensions of Fairhaven’s founding: trust in the instincts and creativity of the individual, freed and unrestricted by typical disciplinary boundaries, but informed by a clear vision of the shape the studies would take, the questions they would ask, and the outcome they would attempt to achieve.

In the early 1970s, the growth of the college brought new faculty members who wanted the college to distinguish itself radically from the rest of the campus. Fairhaven’s courses were a collage of intriguing interdisciplinary takes on important questions and “real-world” problems, problems that promoted the acquisition of complementary sets of disciplinary skills by working on interdisciplinary problems, “experiential learning” adventures, and

“new-age” personal explorations. Students became noted for their creativity and unconventional initiatives. At roughly three-year intervals, the whole college would try to cut loose from its moorings by organizing whole quarters around themes, offering a single course taught by the entire faculty, or dividing the quarter into two-week segments during which a student could take only one course. This tradition died around the end of the decade, but was soon revived in the mid-1980s when the spirit of risk and innovation it fostered was already missed.

While the invitation to work in an ungraded (narrative-evaluation) interdisciplinary environment with an uncommon degree of responsibility attracted some inspired and beautifully-educated teachers, some wonderful students who compiled distinguished records and went on to notable careers, and numbers of returning adults who appreciated being treated as partners in learning in the classroom, it also attracted an assortment of academic loafers, students smitten by indecision or lack of commitment, or students working the system who wanted to avoid the University’s mathematics requirements. The mix (both student and faculty) was a volatile one. The severe Apollonians entrenched in other units of the university saw Fairhaven as a Dionysian haven, utterly out of control, and worked for its elimination. More balanced academic types held varying views, but only a small minority outside Fairhaven’s boundaries strongly advocated for its blend of risk-taking creativity, problem-centered, interdisciplinary learning, and attention to the educational needs of individuals. Particularly galling was Fairhaven’s willingness to forgive academic sin—for instance, its refusal to punish failure (incomplete grades simply disappeared from the transcript a year later), and its insistence that every failure was also a learning experience. Enrollment peaked in the mid-1970s, only to decline sharply, rise a bit around 1980, and then fall again to precipitate another crisis in 1982.

Nearly eliminated by its enemies in 1982 and 1983, the college survived the battle, rallied, and regained stability. Due to the special efforts of distinguished alumni and faculty members as well as students, the central administration of the university began to recognize Fairhaven’s special attributes: its national reputation, the quality and reputation of its faculty, and its unique contributions to the campus and community. With strong central support, solid growth followed in the late 1980s and ’90s.

In the ’80s, students, at Fairhaven as elsewhere, were very self-centered. You could not change the world until you could change yourself. And you could not change yourself until you understood yourself and “resolved” your “issues.” So the rest of the world was largely held in abeyance until the self got “devel-



oped”—an endless task. It was either an inner perfectionism, doomed to failure, or an escape from freedom and practical work. Politics, except for an occasional protest, was out of fashion. This preoccupation with self was Apollonian in its focused conviction and rational approach, and Dionysian in its belief that with time and growth, one’s bliss would simply emerge from beneath the oppressing layers of acquired inhibitions—like throwing off clothing.

The faculty (those who survived the cuts following drops in enrollment and the state’s economic crises) responded by emphasizing critical contexts and issues of social justice and slowly moved to codify procedures and policies. The effort was aimed at creating the structures for more meaningful supervision as well as more meaningful support of student work. This was Apollonian work—creating order, predictability, and fairness. Still, through the ’80s, the faculty fought any suggestion that the college should resemble the “main campus” in any way, especially by resisting any procedures that might encumber its students with too many requirements or refusing ever to grant exceptions to rules. The Dionysian mystery of creativity, it was assumed, resided in every student, and the objective was to “educate” it, to lead it out. The emphasis was on teaching critical perspectives, while simultaneously nurturing the particular nexus of activities, concerns, and directions that characterized each student’s genius. Ideas of precisely what constitutes interdisciplinarity remained as broad as the variety of students and faculty members could conceive. Some students carefully crafted concentrations in which work in two or three disciplines supported a particular occupational goal or led to an eventual graduate program. Others developed concentrations on problems or questions, using combinations of interdisciplinary and disciplinary courses to gain perspectives and the acquisition of practical skills that would help them pursue this interest after graduation. Still others sought some holy grail, framing a set of studies around the understanding that body, mind, and spirit constitute a single entity, or in the “holistic” understanding of all life, or in the achievement of an artistic goal. These relatively Dionysian studies exploited experiential, disciplinary, and interdisciplinary experiences to build and support the convictions on which they were based, and to increase the ability of the concentrator to act on those convictions.

Our objective has always been to promote independence, to teach students how to approach problems by refining questions and providing them with the skills and knowledge needed to respond to them. We have always contended that we are teaching students how to learn in community and to learn without teachers. We do this well, as attested by the success of our graduates in a variety of activities and professions, in and out of academia. But our

ability to support individual concentrations that are intensively interdisciplinary and, at the same time full of critical rigor, has depended more on the determined qualities of the students and their abilities to absorb systematic and critical understandings across disciplinary lines than it has on the views of interdisciplinarity promoted by faculty advisors.

The students, in putting together their programs, have had to find their own realm of “interdisciplinarity.” Furthermore, they had to describe in detailed, written statements the rationales that connect sets of ideas, understandings, and ways of knowing with that realm. These rationales are developed in the Concentration Seminar (a required course devoted to the process of framing and drafting one’s concentration proposal) and then through consulting with one’s faculty committee and revising until approval is won. It is an exhaustive, probing, difficult process, as much for those who, when they walk into the course, know exactly what they want to do and how they want to pursue it (the Apollonians), as for those who count on inspiration and have no idea what they have to do to fulfill it (the Dionysians), to say nothing of the Herculean labors in store for the merely indecisive and uncertain. Of course, the ideas of interdisciplinarity, the connective tissue that keeps the concentration alive as an organism of study, continue to evolve as the students learn more and the faculty advisor understands better what practical and theoretical linkages will work best and be most illuminating for the student. Since each concentration is unique, the faculty must keep guessing about curriculum. How can a curriculum be devised to assist students who we know will be different from each other, and whose differences we are trying to support?

How can we sustain any community of learning amidst such a sea of difference? Indeed, how can we teach a class in which no student resembles another—in age, background, sensibility, or preparation? Ironically, no interest has been shown by this relatively accomplished faculty to use contemporary theories of interdisciplinarity for the purpose of establishing common ground, or to provide a disciplined foundation for the description and methodology of interdisciplinary degrees. Most faculty members have not encountered this body of theory, and would, I venture to guess, be skeptical of its application to the huge body of proposals we routinely receive, and of its usefulness in helping us re-shape and refine them. In part, this may be because “interdisciplinarity” is not seen as likely to be conceivable as one thing: “interdisciplinarity” would be a more palatable framework in the Fairhaven culture.

In the ’90s, founding faculty members started to retire and new faculty arrived, bringing with them postmodernism and identity politics beyond feminism. They also brought stricter policy enforcement. Students now follow

more rules more often—we have eased our lives by becoming more Apollonian. But their studies have a new kind of interdisciplinarity. Following the example set by feminism in the 1970s, Fairhaven students have been receiving heavy doses of “race, class, and gender” in most of their courses, courses that heavily employ various modes of postmodern critical “theory.” In its most extreme forms, these “theories” present themselves, ironically enough, as universal (that is, as hegemonic), tending to read all objects of study, in whatever discipline, as evidence for surrounding social structures and power relations, hegemonic and otherwise. The objects themselves are seen as collages of these forces, collages that lack intrinsic coherence, and all studies, in some sense, devolve into social studies. In my view, this tendency has undercut a rich upwelling of interdisciplinary thinking, and has flattened all disciplines into something loosely seen as the social sciences.

At Fairhaven, while identity politics and deconstruction remain influential, their impact is softening with the general trend of the times. We still find artists and other students who are true believers, who affirm that their work must be grounded only in these “critical” truths and must celebrate them with abandon, without critique. They are the Apollonian Dionysians in action! Finally, as “new age” fashions have not entirely died, and the romantic idealism of young minds continues to simplify possibilities for making change in the future, we continue to be assured by some students that it is clear that just as the earth is one organism, so are we all united; and we will surely all come to see the truth that All Life is One. Thus, the Dionysian Apollonian dissolves all difference (on theoretical grounds) into mystical union!

The key to our future seems clear: we must remain open to the astonishing originality of scholarship and creativity sometimes found in our midst. Two convictions endure. The first is that learning in community is a profound experience. The second is that a robust respect for difference—coupled with an appetite for the surprising variety of interdisciplinary forms, conceptions, and ambitions that students can bring to their work, and animated by the perpetual collision of Dionysian and Apollonian energies—can guide sound undergraduate study.

## The Gallatin School of Individualized Studies, New York University

In 1969, The Performance Group, under the direction of Richard Schechner, an NYU professor and leader in the interdisciplinary field of performance studies, staged a production of *The Bacchae*, entitled *Dionysus in 69*. A young

filmmaker named Brian de Palma captured the moment on film, but prints are rare, and Dionysus in 69 is now chiefly remembered for inviting the audience on stage for a rock dance initiated by Dionysus and a “group grope” with the choir of Bacchae whose members were engaged in a simulated nude orgy. With its depiction of a repressive hegemony challenged by a hippie counter-culture, the play captured the spirit of the 1960s and illustrated the perennial struggle between the Apollonian and the Dionysian. Two years later and a few blocks away, on another legendary evening in NYU history, two men dined at an Italian restaurant in Greenwich Village: Vice-President L. Jay Oliva, chair of a task force on undergraduate education, and history professor Herbert London, head of the committee on “The College Alternative.” Over clams and a bottle of wine, they conceived an experimental program in which students could develop their own individualized programs, do independent studies and internships, and take courses all over NYU. As Dionysus in 69 had broken the fourth wall in the theater, this new program would be a “university without walls.” For many, the UWW, like other educational experiments that came out of the ’60s, represented an expression of the Dionysian spirit. Depending on one’s point of view, that phrase meant the UWW was refreshingly experimental and anti-authoritarian or irrational, disruptive, and destructive.

In the early days of the UWW, there were truly no walls and no courses and no faculty, just a handful of students and some NYU faculty members willing to sign on as advisers. After a momentary stint as director, Oliva went off in another direction, which would lead him to the presidency of NYU. London took over as director; and under his leadership, for the next two decades, the experiment proved very successful. In 1995, it was made a regular school of NYU and named the Gallatin School of Individualized Study. Gallatin now has 25 full-time faculty members, 60 adjuncts, and nearly 200 NYU faculty members serving as advisers. Faculty members are united in their commitment to interdisciplinary studies and undergraduate teaching, as reflected in hiring and tenure criteria. The curriculum consists of over 200 courses, nearly all of them interdisciplinary in one way or another: first-year seminars, theme-based seminars, writing courses, arts workshops, and community-learning classes. The student body, at first all returning adults and transfers, has grown to over 1000 undergraduates; now, almost all are traditional aged, about half transfers and half four-year students. There is also an M.A. program enrolling 200 students. Students do about a third of their coursework in Gallatin, the rest elsewhere in the University, plus several independent studies and internships, and they integrate their studies and ex-

periences in a capstone colloquium for undergraduates and a thesis project for graduate students.

With its origins in the alternative education movement, its flexible requirements, and its emphasis on individualized education, Gallatin was always in danger of being perceived as a flakey, overly permissive, do-your-own-thing experiment in post-60s liberalism, a program lacking in academic standards and rigor: too much Dionysus, not enough Apollo. In order to counter that perception—and to ensure that all students were in fact getting a good general education and developing a program with intellectual integrity—the Gallatin faculty created many structures and systems, policies and procedures, curricular initiatives and programs. At each step of the way, the issue seemed to boil down to how to balance and integrate the two competing energies: on the one hand, the impulse to achieve order and control, to ensure that programs were rationally planned and implemented, to maintain rigor and discipline; and on the other, the desire to sustain the original commitment to experimentation, to creative intuition and spontaneity, to freedom and letting things happen spontaneously without exerting too much control. Often, the result was, as the bulletin puts it, “a unique synthesis of rigor and flexibility,” but typically, the process was a lot messier because it involved endless, sometimes polarizing, faculty debates.

One ongoing debate has centered on the “great books” component of the curriculum. Early in Gallatin’s history, the faculty began creating interdisciplinary, great-books courses to ensure that students off doing their own thing were also having a shared experience and getting a good old-fashioned education. In addition, seniors were required to take oral examinations—administered by three faculty members—on a list of great books compiled by the student. Then, in the early 1980s, the requirement was made more structured, and all students were required to read the same twelve classics by Homer, Sophocles, Plato, Aristotle, Dante, and Shakespeare, works that they would study in a sequence of classic-texts courses. In the ’90s, after some long and heated debates, the requirement was changed again—to make it more individualized and flexible and less oriented toward the Western classics. The “oral examination” became the “colloquium”; the sacred dozen classics were no longer required reading, and students could choose all the books on their list, so long as seven were pre-modern and they were all integrated by an overarching theme explained in a “rationale” essay. In terms of the curriculum, this change meant an end to the domination of the classic-texts sequence; instead, there was a burst of energy devoted to creating new interdisciplinary courses on a wide range of themes, typically reflecting the postmodern ori-

entation of newer faculty members. These days, some faculty members are questioning the efficacy of the pre-modern text requirement, and some are suggesting that the whole colloquium be replaced by a senior project with much greater opportunity for individual scholarship, perhaps not related to classic texts at all. Such proposals will no doubt be resisted by those who remain committed to the classics, and once again we are likely to hear the debate framed in terms of “rigor and flexibility” and all the Apollonian-Dionysian dualities.

Another point of tension is focused on the individualized concentration required of all students. A basic tenet of Gallatin since its origin has been that students develop an interdisciplinary or at least multidisciplinary concentration incorporating coursework in Gallatin with coursework taken in the other schools of NYU, as well as independent study and internships. This concentration is described briefly on the study plan students fill out at registration time, a plan that becomes an ongoing topic of conversations between student and adviser. For a long time, many faculty members argued that students would benefit from a more structured requirement. They felt that concentrations should involve a minimum number of credits, be explicitly integrative (not just a double or triple major), and reflect a serious degree of intentionality—planned out during the sophomore year in a thorough essay, reviewed during the junior year, and incorporated into the senior-year colloquium to ensure that students stuck to their plans or made official revisions to them. Opponents argued that developing a concentration was a personal and ambiguous process, one that should not be hampered by lots of new rules; for many students, being forced to plan a concentration would be a dangerous impediment, and it was perfectly legitimate if integration and the concentration were seen as retrospective activities—something figured out as one completed college rather than something that needed to be carefully planned. In the end, the faculty compromised, but neither side was entirely satisfied; this year, the new requirement is being implemented, with more modifications likely to follow: the dialectical process is ongoing.

A related site of tension involves the issue of how aware Gallatin students and faculty members are about interdisciplinarity as a methodology. Some have only an intuitive feeling for interdisciplinary study, while others are well informed about it and its place in the alternative education movement. Students can see that Gallatin courses integrate several disciplinary perspectives, and they know that they should be doing likewise as they develop their concentrations. Many faculty members seem to feel that this is sufficient and

that students and faculty members are perfectly capable of doing interdisciplinary work without being instructed in its methodologies. Others, however, feel that learning through osmosis and imitation is insufficient and that Gallatin needs to incorporate training in interdisciplinary methodology into the first-year seminar, or perhaps highlight it in a separate course. Again, it is a question of balancing and synthesizing the impulse to order, control, rationalize, and normalize, with the desire to make room for the aberrant and divergent, the intuitive and anarchic.

While Nietzsche's dialectical dichotomy goes a long way toward identifying the tensions between non-traditional programs and the rest of academia, between the rationalists and intuitionists on the Gallatin faculty, and between the opposing psychological impulses that exist within each individual student and teacher, it is important to acknowledge that the university is essentially an Apollonian enterprise. The Dionysian urge to "forget the self" can hardly be viewed as primary in a "school of individualized study," where the individuation of the self is a principal goal. And even with its strong emphasis on the creative arts and experiential learning, Gallatin remains, like the university as a whole, committed to rationalism and critical thinking. The Socratic belief in dialectical reasoning as the path to Truth, the maxims of "know thyself" and "nothing in excess," the view that knowledge has the capacity to set us free and even lead to virtue and happiness—these are fundamental to Plato's Academy, the scientific enterprise, and the modern university. Nietzsche believed that this optimistic rationalism, "with the scourge of its syllogisms," killed Greek tragedy, but it is a basic premise of higher learning.

## The Hutchins School of Liberal Studies, Sonoma State University

Despite external and internal challenges to its unique pedagogy, the Hutchins School of Liberal Studies at Sonoma State University has maintained a commitment to interdisciplinary inquiry and the seminar format since its inception in 1969. It has been shaped by a continuous dialectic between what the School's founder, Warren Olson (1984), characterized as Dionysian and Apollonian tendencies—between a freewheeling, experimental spirit and more rigorous structures that incorporate "accountability." Currently, the Hutchins School faces a new institutional challenge: detailed, state-mandated content prescriptions in teacher education that threaten its practice of process-oriented, student-centered pedagogy.

The Hutchins School seeks to offer a genuine general education for citizenship, a vision enunciated by its namesake, Robert Maynard Hutchins (1953), who asserted that the objective of a liberal education is not to teach all the facts and skills students will ever need to know, but to encourage them to develop habits of learning such that they continue to educate themselves over their lifetimes. In our effort to foster “lifelong learners” and develop “learning communities,” the Hutchins School offers an alternative general education curriculum consisting of a four-semester sequence of twelve unit seminar courses. Each of these block courses is interdisciplinary and combined they fulfill the entire lower-division, general education requirements with the exception of mathematics. The curriculum is constructed collaboratively by instructors holding doctorates in a variety of disciplines (e.g., History, Physics, English, Geology, Anthropology, Visual Arts, Theater, History of Science, Developmental Psychology, and Engineering). Content is organized thematically, supporting integrative inquiry and openness to multiple perspectives on issues of social concern, as opposed to the transmission of a discipline-centered focus on expertise or “truth.”

When it was founded, in the “interesting times” of the late 1960s, Sonoma State University in northern California was a hotbed of counterculture ideals and lifestyles. Olson remembers it as a time of open pot smoking on campus, skinny-dipping, and sweat lodges (which earned it the nickname, “Granola U”). The Hutchins School reflected this era of experimentation and freedom, and was originally structured as a semi-autonomous “cluster school.” It aimed to overcome “1) Passivity, 2) Fragmentation, and 3) Alienation” through a practice that was “[s]tudent-centered, concerned with process, and committed to allowing the affective realm a central place” (Olson 1969, p.1). All courses were conducted as small seminars, and graded credit/no credit. The curriculum resembled a “great books” program, supplemented by contemporary literature and an exploration of the day’s burning issues.

Olson has called the first year of the School a “Tragicomedy,” as Apollonian and Dionysian tensions exploded into open conflict between members of the faculty. Several of the founders recognized that minimal structures—including an agreed upon booklist—were essential to a program that took texts as the focal points of each session. The Dionysians, however, considered any requirements at all an authoritarian imposition and refused to collaborate with “punitive motivators.” After a tumultuous first year, the Dionysians were exiled, and the program hired a new cadre of young instructors who reached consensus on what were, in fact, extremely loose structures. The central philosophy of the School, then as now, involves a serious commitment to “dia-



logic” (more than Socratic) learning. It trusts students to take ownership of their seminars, demands that they construct their own meanings from each text, and encourages them to find their “voice” through writing. The *process* of collaborative learning is emphasized, rather than the mastery of any particular *content*. Courses in the lower division remain graded credit/no credit, eschew testing in any form, and foster close relationships between students and instructors who offer largely narrative evaluations and face-to-face conferences.

Over time, however, institutional forces and changes in student demographics have led to a degree of “rationalization” in the program. By the late 1970s, a new generation of younger, more career-oriented students led to a drop in demand for non-specialized degrees in Liberal Studies. In response, the Hutchins School developed a graded, upper-division program that included a “teacher track” for pre-credential students who now make up the majority of the student body. State requirements for this track, combined with budgetary constraints, demanded significant curricular changes (e.g., a certain loss of experimentation and the need to offer a number of large lecture/discussion courses). The once autonomous program was folded into the university’s School of Arts and Humanities, although it has been able to hold onto its own full-time faculty, and thus provide continuity and commitment to the essentials of its pedagogy.

Further Apollonian shifts have come about as a result of changes in average age, aptitude, and literacy of the student body; most of our students are now fresh out of high school, attend college because they’re “supposed” to, and are steeped in popular culture rather than literature. Since there is little consequence for not completing assigned reading, many students will simply not do it, resulting in seminars filled with personal anecdotes and tossed-out opinion rather than textual analysis and systematic critique. In an attempt to promote “accountability,” some professors are requiring typed response papers that address questions directly related to the texts at each seminar session, a practice once frowned upon as “policing.” Some instructors engage in “disguised lectures,” finding that contemporary students often lack the contextual knowledge to make sense of some texts.

During the past decade, a wave of retirements and hiring has also changed the tone and content of the curriculum. There has been a noticeable de-emphasis of the Greeks, an infusion of post-structural and post-colonial influences, and an increased use of media and instructional technologies. In fact, the conduct of the seminar, in which all viewpoints are interrogated and no single truth is taken as authoritative, has meant that in practice the School

has been implicitly “postmodern” from the beginning. What has changed, to some degree, is the theory and terminology that explicates this practice (e.g., “multivocality” and “incredulity to metanarratives”). In a sense, each new instructor generates a small Apollonian push. Generally fresh out of graduate school, with a deep commitment to their hard-won expertise and often adept at lecturing, new professors often mourn the loss of disciplinary content. Although new academic fields such as gender and cultural studies are interdisciplinary in research methodology and subject matter, they are often quite traditional in their pedagogy, emphasizing the transmission of content from teacher to student, an approach sometimes dismissed in Hutchins, following Freire (1970), as the “banking concept of education.” The notion of interdisciplinarity always implicit in the Hutchins pedagogy is not that of grafting one discipline’s approach onto another’s—that is, with identifying, accumulating, and connecting discrete disciplinary knowledge. Rather, it focuses on questions with any number of possible answers, questions that may or may not require more than one discipline to address. Our students tend not to think of “disciplines” at all, but rather of *problems*. The emphasis on process and problems—the organization of the seminar around discussion of issues rather than the transmission of knowledge—means that students may not even mention what the instructor feels are the key points of any text. New instructors thus tend to be “too directive” in seminars, perhaps launching into mini-lectures or employing various methods to assess competency in subject matter. For example, I was once quite impressed with how students in a seminar were making connections between Darwinian ideas and social ideologies, but was appalled to discover that not one student could adequately define natural selection. I launched into a detailed explanation, which one student—a creationist, it so happened—challenged as the imposition of a single truth on the group.

Over time, new instructors come to see that the program *works*. Students do indeed learn what they desire to learn, which may not accord with the instructors’ ideas. More significantly, they *retain* what they learn, having “made it their own” through synthesis with knowledge obtained in other courses and with their own experience. Students become skilled writers and critical thinkers, famed on campus as creative and outspoken questioners of authority. Our alumni, among the most generous in the California State University system, often describe how inspiring it was to be taken seriously as co-learners, rather than passive recipients of knowledge. Hutchins aims to develop socially conscious, broadly educated *citizens*, though in the process we sacrifice depth in any particular discipline. The mix of innovative thinking, outspoken indepen-

dence, and lack of discipline-based expertise leads some of our colleagues in other departments to tell us that Hutchins students are both their best and worst.

Placing trust in students does work, though only when students fully invest in the process and challenge themselves. Because the seminar format works best with *narrative* materials, there has been a constant struggle to educate students adequately in the natural sciences, which many of our students have a tendency to avoid. In response to imbalances and gaps that may result from “doing one’s own thing,” students in the upper division are now required to take interdisciplinary seminars in each of four core areas—social sciences, natural sciences, arts, and psychology—as well as an integrative capstone course, Senior Synthesis, that aims to help students self-evaluate and connect knowledge across courses and disciplines. Other Apollonian changes include an increased explicitness about the theory and practice of interdisciplinary inquiry, (near) uniformity in what had been somewhat idiosyncratic assessment practices, and the use of portfolios. Many of these changes seemed to be motivated more by faculty than student demand, and represent responses to trends in pedagogical theory—such as the “outcomes assessment” movement of the past decade—as well as requirements to satisfy program reviews. While most contemporary students clearly need more explicit guidance and criteria for excellence in integrative learning, our students generally enroll in the program not because of theory, but because of practice—for the seminars, for the opportunity to study independently and design their own programs, for the close collaborative relationships with peers and instructors. The portfolios, intended as “tools of student empowerment,” are loaded with self-evaluation tables, integrative matrices, structured writing assignments, and question sequences. Some of our students complain that these structures are “make work,” with little real meaning, and that we are beginning to overload them and ourselves with “assessments” and matrices that may look good in program reviews but are top-down, overly busy, and homogenous, threatening to bury what one Apollonian himself called “the Zen” of the program.

Each time a structure is introduced, however, faculty members soon make it their own in response to personal inclinations and in dialogue with students (every seminar has different needs and dynamics). Then, as a new hire objects, or a veteran is confronted with a chaotic seminar, another Apollonian innovation is proposed. This dialectic is a lively part of the faculty’s ongoing collaborative “seminar,” conducted for the most part in good humor and collegiality. The more serious challenges to the Dionysian spirit have come from external institutional forces.

Recent developments at both the state and federal levels, namely California Senate Bill 2042 and the federal “No Child Left Behind” initiative, have mandated that our pre-credential students acquire knowledge and skills in highly detailed and prescriptive subject-matter content. It is almost a certainty that our students will be required to pass a standardized test to be certified as “highly qualified.” Furthermore, the budget crisis in the state of California has seriously impacted educational institutions at all levels, resulting in reductions in course offerings and increases in class size. Some of our colleagues in discipline-based departments continue to question our rigor and see our small seminars as a luxury that can no longer be afforded. Interdisciplinary programs have always faced the questions on a theoretical level that we must now answer in concrete terms: How can the Hutchins School maintain a commitment to integrative pedagogy and self-directed learning in the face of standards that emphasize disconnected, discipline-based content, and a laundry list of competencies? How can students be encouraged to invest in a broad, interdisciplinary education when it is mandated at the state and federal levels that their chief requirement is passing a single test? Many students, too, are increasingly reluctant to learn for learning’s sake and demand content and assignments “relevant” to their careers. Although we have recently attempted to make more explicit the contributions (and limitations) of the traditional disciplines, the kind of inquiry we encourage in our seminars simply cannot be assessed by multiple-choice tests with “correct” answers.

We are thus challenged to communicate the value of a broad, interdisciplinary liberal arts education to students, parents, and administrators increasingly focused on specialization and the job market. This means that we must become far more explicit, from outreach to graduation, about what integrative pedagogy means, while simultaneously somehow not getting in the way of self-directed inquiry by imposing theories and top-down structures. We are called upon to reach out and defend our Dionysian ivory tower outside its walls (i.e., *to get political*). We will be required to tighten up and demonstrate the effectiveness of our pedagogy, but will strive to remain loyal to the experimental, even rebellious spirit the School has embodied since its founding. We will continue to host poetry slams and bonfires, while reluctantly helping our students to take standardized tests, thus requiring our students to be Apollonian Dionysians. We still recognize, as did our founder Warren Olson (citing Nietzsche), that one must have a bit of chaos in order to give birth to a dancing star.

## New Century College, George Mason University

George Mason University's New Century College was created in 1995 in response to a statewide call to colleges and universities in Virginia to create degree programs and learning environments for the future. The integrative studies program evolved from several long-standing, local innovations that experimented with changing the learning environment from teacher-centered and authored to student-centered and authored. Many of the faculty members, including both the dean and associate dean of the new college, were faculty members in PAGE—the Program for Alternative General Education—founded in 1982, and brought its collaborative, active learning approaches and freshman seminar cohort experiences with them to New Century College. After almost two years of faculty-driven research and study, New Century College (NCC) evolved into an experimental, small college within a larger research university, a unit with the goal of developing curricular approaches that would prepare students for the complexities of the future, promote student learning and practices, and connect students to the world around them through structured experiential learning requirements. No other degree-granting unit on the campus of GMU at that time required structured experiential learning as a graduation requirement. With experiential learning playing such a prominent role in the College, the Center for Service Learning and Student Leadership, and the Center for Field Study were relocated to the college and became academic centers within the College, whereas they were formerly seen as traditional centers in student services. These centers, now located within the College, offered new and more expanded opportunities to connect classroom work to out-of-classroom experiences and practices. New ways of assessing learning and a new definition of “teacher” resulted; and the tension between an Apollonian setting, in which outcome could be somewhat predicted and valued, and the Dionysian approach to unscripted learning experiences increased.

As noted, NCC evolved from several different experiments located in different and diffuse parts of the University, disconnected from each other and without widespread impact. This new college of integrative studies served to link the many small pockets of innovation created and nurtured by just a few faculty members into a single coherent unit based on experimentation and committed to the integration of knowledge. The local innovations included “writing across the curriculum” (with its models for infusing writing into disciplinary courses) and the Office of Instructional Development (which promotes widespread use of technology such as the NCC Technology Across

the Curriculum project) as well as the recent proliferation of comprehensive theme-based learning communities and such experiential learning activities as service learning, community-based research, community action, internships, and advocacy. New Century College provides the University with a specific unit dedicated to incorporating new approaches, new partnerships, and new structures that continually serve to challenge traditional learning models, especially through integrative and experiential learning.

Promoting innovation and recruiting some of the most talented faculty members in the university did not go without notice or consequence. Tensions between traditional disciplinary and experimental interdisciplinary approaches, as well as marginalization of many faculty members who left their disciplinary affiliations, began at the time of conception and continue to some degree even today. With that said, faculty members participating in the integrative studies program all share a common respect for and comfort with blurring the distinctions among disciplines and operating in those interdisciplinary spaces where new knowledge can emerge, new applications to some older problems can be applied, and unique ways of knowing can evolve. Faculty members who are comfortable with the often messy environments in which learning takes place in interdisciplinary courses come to them with a strong foundation in core disciplinary knowledge and experiences. Because of their strengths, a challenging integrative studies degree program can be achieved.

The typical NCC Integrative Studies degree includes the following elements:

- A core freshman learning community cohort experience (modeled from PAGE);
- Courses and learning communities built around a concentration or pre-professional area of study (adapted from Evergreen State College);
- A competency-based education with portfolio assessment (modeled after Alverno); and
- Experiential learning (developed by the GMU faculty).

These elements are designed to fit together and create the base for a life-long learning process centered on students as learners and scholars, cutting across disciplinary lines and looking at broad, complex problems through the lenses of multiple disciplines and a variety of learning approaches. Typical course offerings include: Violence and Gender; Cancer and its Social

Impact; Community Health and Research; Innovation and Entrepreneurship; Politics, Art and History; Cyberculture; and Construction of Difference: Race, Class and Gender. Integration occurs as a result of content and experience, utilizing the university community model of student authorship and voice.

Faculty members who join the College do so with the promise of a shared and collaborative governance system, an unprecedented University commitment to utilizing the Boyer (1990) model of scholarship in promotion and tenure decisions, and a flexible system to respond to opportunities and new initiatives as they present themselves. Faculty members have the option of leaving their disciplinary affiliation and departments and progressing through a system of promotion and tenure in integrative and interdisciplinary studies. Several faculty members tenured under traditional disciplinary standards have chosen to utilize the Boyer model to reflect their new integrative approaches to scholarship when they were candidates for promotion to full professor. The College has also succeeded in tenuring less senior faculty who utilize the title of associate professor for integrative and interdisciplinary studies.

To achieve the programmatic goals of the College and retain experiential learning as a central component of the core, a consistent and healthy tension between the Apollonian and Dionysian approaches to integration is ever present. On one hand, the core provides a neatly Apollonian approach, with its common readings, common vocabulary, faculty advisers, and well-articulated course requirements. On the other, a more Dionysian and chaotic approach is promoted as faculty members encourage risk, discovery, and inquiry. These competing and often irreconcilable approaches model the reality and ambiguity of the world for our students. Faculty members in integrative studies deal with this tension and ambiguity on an ongoing basis in the experiential learning degree requirements. Students often seek the security and regimen of standardized methods of instruction and learning, especially in the early stages of their academic careers; however, as they mature intellectually, they become more comfortable with a Dionysian approach. In many ways, the same holds true for faculty members. To leave the Apollonian comfort of teaching as one was taught, to abandon control of the teaching environment, even in small ways, and to embrace a more generative Dionysian environment takes a confident and experienced educator.

Experiential education plays a central role in the development of knowledge and understanding, one that moves beyond the theories and information gleaned from texts and classrooms in the integrative studies program. Through experiential education, implemented through the many partnerships for education forged by the College with corporations, civic organizations, and lo-

cal business owners, students connect their study to the workplace and the world. Immediate concrete experiences become the bases for reflection and integration of classroom knowledge. Through the melding of theory and practice, the Apollonian and Dionysian approaches can be dissected and discussed. The neat textbook approach must now be reconciled with the reality of human nature, experience, and the confusion inherent in different life perspectives. The goal of experiential learning is to have theory and practice meet, look each other straight in the face, and become integrated in an authentic learning experience for our students.

The curriculum within the learning communities is never easy. That's not to say that the work is hard, but it is definitely a challenge which is something that few of my classes are able to provide. I have always been presented with new ideas and concepts that have been very different from my personal traditional beliefs causing me to step outside my comfort zone and challenge my belief systems, something that colleges should be all about. (NCC junior)

Our belief in this approach is so strong that all Integrative Studies students participate in at least 12 credit hours of experiential education followed by a practiced reflection and portfolio development, prior to graduation. Faculty members who teach in the College are tutored by our Center for Service and Leadership and mentored by senior faculty colleagues who have been involved in experiential education to help them develop, implement, and assess student-learning outcomes. Experiential education can take the form of internships, co-op programs, service learning, community-based research projects, field study, mentoring and tutoring, as well as study abroad and community projects. New Century College's motto is "Connecting the Classroom to the World." Students and faculty members alike participate in partnerships with government agencies, local and regional businesses, non-profit organizations, public school systems and associations as well as local clubs and political parties to enrich and apply knowledge and forge connections for deeper understanding. Thus, a Dionysian approach is institutionalized alongside Apollonian elements.

The creation of New Century College was a major experiment for research-oriented George Mason University. Since its inception in 1995, built as it was on the back of previous successful models, New Century College has changed and is continually being molded by internal and external forces. From a once-independent college reporting directly to the Provost, to a col-



lege-within-a-college reporting through an Arts and Science Dean to the Provost, the hallmarks of Dionysian experiential learning and Apollonian integrative learning endure.

## New College, University of Alabama

The New College program is an interdisciplinary and integrative program of individualized study that currently resides within the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Alabama, a public and comprehensive university of approximately 21,000 students. Founded in 1971 with a grant from the Sidney Mitchell Foundation, it existed as an independent, degree-granting college at the Tuscaloosa Campus until 1997, when an unpopular merger was managed by a new Provost and President. It currently serves approximately 100 students with eight faculty members, equivalent, through joint appointments, to about five FTE. The heart of the program is six integrated “core” interdisciplinary seminars and a student-designed “depth study.” Despite the disruption caused by the merger, the stability and vibrancy of the program are remarkable, given the inherent political and cultural conservatism of the state of Alabama and an uncertain to poor fiscal environment.

It could be argued that a version of the Apollonian and Dionysian tension was structured into (or at least foregrounded within) the program from its very beginnings. This hardwiring of conflict has served the purpose of ensuring the program’s survival but complicated our ability to articulate clearly what we mean by “interdisciplinarity.” Bernard J. Sloan, in his history of New College (1991), notes that the program was established: “(1) to create an opportunity for a highly individualized education which enables students to draw from all the resources of University classes and faculty and (2) to serve as an experimental unit with the expectation of exporting successful innovations to other sectors of the University” (p. 2). While elements of the mission statement are easily reduced to either the Apollonian or Dionysian perspective, collectively, the statement nurtured an environment in which each philosophical cast of mind could thrive. Popular memory, whatever its reliability, holds that New College students of the early period were infamous for their non-conformity, participation in social and political activism, and general willingness to challenge received wisdom. Similarly, faculty members are celebrated for wildly unconventional pedagogies, deliberate support of student activism, and a self-consciously and heroic dismissal of the professionalism and careerism associated with the University’s research mission. Whether New College facilitated this release of energy or merely

housed it, the College also proved equally adept at the business of institution building. During the program's second decade, it successfully seeded an African American Studies program, a department of Women's Studies, and an ambitious program of external adult education, each of which, by necessity, required significant Apollonian outlook and commitment. Perhaps most significant of all, the program steadily graduated students of diverse ideological commitments, including prominent conservative ideologues and highly successful entrepreneurs.

While these were (and remain) shared commitments of equal importance, it is certainly the case that one or the other has held sway over the hearts and minds of constituents, depending upon the proportion of ideological and disciplinary perspectives of faculty members and prevailing political and cultural conditions. In retrospect, this protean duality has proven to be a distinct and useful element in the evolution of the program. New College was and remains a moving target; supporters, alumni, and faculty members can choose to highlight one aspect or the other of its mission, depending upon the nature or vigor of the critique. If attacked as lacking clear standards or academic depth, we can highlight our attachment to a fairly traditional core of general education seminars, the always recognizable combination of natural science, social science, and humanities and our unique insistence among UA units on a foreign language competency requirement for graduation. If attacked as being merely imitative of great-books, residential colleges, or honors programs, we can highlight our mission to innovate and challenge compartmentalization in the University's research, service *and* teaching missions. It is a shared, and mostly unchallenged, wisdom amongst senior faculty members that our survival has been a result of careful attention to never allowing either the Apollonian or Dionysian perspective to drive the other to irrelevance.

At the same time, this strategic shiftiness complicates the emergence of consensus on interdisciplinarity. The very first New College Bulletin (1971) noted (without comment) in its list of assumptions upon which the program was based that first, "each individual is unique with different needs," and last, "problem-focused, general education experiences of an interdisciplinary nature which demonstrate the integration of knowledge are highly desirable in our modern day world." This split, or apparent contradiction—between a confident belief in our ability and primary responsibility to serve the needs of individual students, and an equally confident vision of what "the modern world" requires—does not, of course, transparently replicate the Apollonian/Dionysian tension. Indeed, one might serve individual student needs by diligently providing them with access to ordered structures or events, while, in

similar fashion, Apollonian instincts can be served by urging a release from convention that facilitates a “forgetting” of self. The Apollonian/Dionysian distinction does come fully into play, however, as the faculty wrestles with the question of how to define interdisciplinarity for the current generation of students—and parents, peer faculty members outside the unit, and campus administrators. Loathe to disturb a carefully-mediated peace, we are hesitant to define ourselves either as masters of multiple disciplines, or, alternatively, as radical skeptics dismissive of any and all disciplinary boundaries. There is a significant degree of shared wariness, regardless of personal inclination, as we seemingly gravitate towards the language of structure and anti-structure (or more crassly, what we should “require” of students) as we regularly—perhaps at each and every faculty meeting—confront this dilemma. In this context, the recurring and inevitable Apollonian/Dionysian distinction can feel more like a shared burden than a useful organizing principle.

Various faculty members and administrators have self-consciously engaged the literature of interdisciplinarity at moments in New College’s history—in grant writing, assessment efforts, or historical stocktaking—but there is little collective memory or documentary evidence of a systematic effort to socialize students into or measure “mastery” of interdisciplinary theory and methods. Student integration of gathered knowledge and management of diverse disciplinary epistemologies have more consistently been seen as an aspect of the advising process, or likely to occur in evolutionary fashion as part of normal student development. Informal surveys of alumni—including those who gathered at our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in autumn 2003—demonstrate a fierce and passionate attachment to the program and the opportunities it afforded, but it is a rare graduate indeed who chooses to highlight interdisciplinary competence, or even awareness of interdisciplinarity, as a significant part of her or his educational experience. If something that might be described as an interdisciplinary sensitivity does emerge, it is most often framed as an ability to solve problems, a penchant to improvise, and an openness to new and differing perspectives.

We continue to do very little formal instruction in the traditions, theories, or methods of interdisciplinarity. By osmosis or simply by paying attention, most of our students grasp a great deal, but at best only a mixed bag of conscious awareness (e.g., skills and command of a unifying narrative) is demonstrated at the exit interview. At this very moment, the faculty is invested in a significant effort to initiate a more intensive and systematic approach to student learning—Apollo is in slight ascendance. Efforts which are in process and likely to succeed include an introductory methods course,

a capstone seminar, a portfolio evaluation, and a revitalized contractual advising process. There exists a significant (if largely inchoate) perception on the part of faculty members that our commitment to interdisciplinarity needs to become much more self-conscious. This perception is tentatively rooted in a hunch that the current culture has produced a strikingly different student motivation for “alternative” higher education, although we are all cautious about suggesting that there was some golden age during which students were “fully knowledgeable” about interdisciplinarity and its human and scholarly potentials. At the same time, it is fair to say that there is a huge historical distance between the current moment and the utopian scheming, reform efforts, and critique of compartmentalized higher education that produced the College and provided it with resources. This measured Apollonian reorganization is rooted less in an enthusiasm for things Apollonian and more in a sense that without it a crass substitute for the Dionysian spirit—a crude careerist utilitarianism characterized by students pursuing vocational goals without any utopian urge—might disrupt the delicate balance that the founders put in place.

As compelling as the need for a self-consciously Apollonian approach to interdisciplinarity may be—one that would address different student motivation, preparation, and trajectories—it must be coupled with a latent Dionysian awareness that addresses skepticism of certain local structural factors. Part of the original rationale for the establishment of New College was that (while never being a residential college in the traditional sense) it would provide students with a unified and integrated experience in the absence of a core curriculum. The adoption of a university-wide core in the early 1980s was a good thing institutionally, but it clearly compromised our uniqueness. Similarly, the merger of the program with the College of Arts and Sciences has created some positive pressures with regard to student access to curricula; at the same time, however, it has eroded our “monopoly” as a transdisciplinary and oppositional enterprise. Similarly, much of what was considered outlandish innovation in undergraduate learning ten years ago is now mainstream wisdom (e.g., small seminars, active and collaborative learning, problem-based learning, faculty-based advising). New “competitors” have emerged on the scene, and they talk our Apollonian talk (e.g., a great books-type program, a seminar-based honors college, a provost’s initiative to fund interdisciplinary and issues-based seminars for first-year students, experiments in course clustering and living learning communities, and a general mainstreaming of small is better). The struggle for the

Dionysian faculty members—or, perhaps more accurately, the Dionysian half of each of us—is imagining what productive release might look like during what seems to be a profoundly un-experimental historical moment.

### School of Interdisciplinary Studies (Western College Program), Miami University

When it was founded in 1974, Western, as it is known today, was originally the Western College of Miami University, and it was located on the campus of the former Western College for Women. Designed to be an experimental cluster college in a traditional university, Western aimed to bring together the best of the experiments from the 1960s: a four-year, living-learning program of lower-division interdisciplinary core courses in the humanities (known as “Creativity and Culture” or CC), the social sciences (“Social Systems” or SS), and the natural sciences (“Natural Systems” or NS); upper-division interdisciplinary concentrations; advanced interdisciplinary seminars; and a senior project leading to a Bachelor of Philosophy degree in Interdisciplinary Studies. Though a separate academic division, it was required to follow all university policies and procedures regarding grades, residence halls, promotion and tenure decisions, etc. This strange amalgam was to be “a part of and apart from” (in the words of the interim committee that first envisioned Western) and “separate but integral” (according to its founding dean, Myron J. Lunine) in its relation to the rest of the university (Mason 1973). The resulting tension shaped most of the distinctive elements of Western, including its approach to interdisciplinarity and, more generally, its balance between Apollonian and Dionysian impulses.

Faculty members were, and continue to be, hired for their commitment to experimental interdisciplinary education and for their ability to meet conventional requirements for promotion and tenure. Although every faculty member thus embodied some elements of both Dionysius and Apollo, the Apollonian spirit held sway in Natural Systems and most Social Systems core courses. Even interdisciplinary topics that were strikingly unconventional (“Utopias”) or overly ambitious (“From the Universe to the Duck Pond”) were approached through lab experiments, formal theories, problem sets, and the like. The Dionysian spirit was evident, not only in the prevalence of alcohol and drugs in the Western residence halls, but also in Creativity and Culture courses that dealt interdisciplinarily with liminality, flow, and play, rites of passage, improvisational theatre, toys, fairy tales, sunrise at the Serpent Mound, and the construction of a sweat lodge. Still, SS and NS courses took

on some minor Dionysian elements—such as the naturalist essay (NS) and simulation games (SS)—while CC courses consistently required students to think and write critically and logically about even the flakiest stuff.

Apollonian and Dionysian impulses are integrated in several ways: informally, by students within the living-learning program; structurally, by blurring the boundaries between classroom and residence hall; programmatically, through a step-by-step process for designing individualized concentrations that include internships and other experiential elements as well as courses from several disciplines; and academically, through a senior-project requirement, a requirement mandating that all “creative” projects have an equal analytical component. In the early years of the program, the need for integration was also addressed by means of cross-area courses between CC and SS, such as *Death and Dying*, and between CC and NS, such as *Benjamin Franklin*; these courses got left behind as the curriculum became more institutionalized. Recently, the faculty has made several unsuccessful attempts to develop an integrative seminar that draws together all three areas. Nonetheless, students routinely do what the faculty still has trouble doing (perhaps because it was not educated in such programs): they achieve integration of the most broadly-based integrative kind, seeing NS, SS, CC, and the living-learning program (the “fourth core”) as a single coherent package. Indeed, Western students do not see a fundamental difference between community and classroom. That broad integration is made possible by softening the dichotomy between self and community, classroom and residence hall, faculty members and students, living and learning, as well as between one discipline (or even one cognate area such as humanities or social sciences) and another. Instead of dualistic, either/or thinking, students are free to engage in holistic, both/and thinking, choosing to find and embrace the strengths of erstwhile opposite perspectives and to integrate what is of value in each into a broader understanding. Even the us/them mentality that so long contrasted Western and Miami has largely been replaced by efforts to draw the University into the activism promoted by Western students (co-education, Center for Social Action, Oxford Tenants Association, Center for Service Learning and Civic Leadership) and to infuse its curricula with innovations pioneered by Western faculty members (University Honors Program, theme learning communities, environmental studies co-majors). Western has indeed become separate but integral.

The Western faculty has long been ambivalent about the role of disciplines in interdisciplinary study. That became clear when, in 1980-81, we shared for the first time our individual definitions of interdisciplinary study and found

that a faculty of thirteen had at least fourteen different definitions. Most of those definitions made reference to disciplines, since most contemporary knowledge has been constructed through them, though a minority objected in principle to the disciplines, viewing them as artificial impediments to knowledge. Even the majority, however, was deeply suspicious of disciplinary hegemony. Quite possibly as a compromise, most courses draw on disciplinary knowledge most of the time (even to this day), but (in SS and CC) rarely identify the disciplinary affiliation of authors; and preferred readings come from authors who cut across disciplinary lines. During the 1980s, the CC faculty became caught up in postmodernism, and most CC and SS faculty members hired in the last decade were heavily imbued with that approach. Now, even the legitimacy as well as the hegemony of the disciplines have been challenged. Since the very term “interdisciplinary” was developed during decades of disciplinary supremacy, and thus defined in terms of disciplines whose place in the construction of knowledge is now being challenged, the faculty has found discussions of interdisciplinarity even more uncomfortable. Since “interdisciplinary studies” literally identify our school, discussions of mission, goals, and objectives that have been institutionally mandated in recent years proved problematic. Conventional tensions between younger and older faculty members that ran counter to the ethos of the program began to develop as well. Even so, greater clarity and precision in the professional literature on interdisciplinarity have made it possible for receptive faculty members to make their interdisciplinary expectations clearer to students. The down side of that process is that it also emphasizes the rift between faculty members who embrace disciplines and those who reject them.

As the Program and its faculty have matured, there has been a modest shift in the balance of power toward the Apollonian spirit, facilitated in recent years by a scholarship program that attracts students who are academically better prepared. Over the decades, academic standards have steadily risen, enhancing rigor somewhat at the expense of spontaneity and experimentation. But they have also redefined what is meant by rigor. Rigor now applies to all steps in the interdisciplinary process, to integration as much as to drawing insights from disciplines. And it applies to narrative, performance, and public speaking as well. Even the most Dionysian of activities may be slowly submitting to an Apollonian yoke (e.g., pressures for safe sex, responsible drinking, and designated drivers).

Where there appears to be no disagreement among the faculty members is over the need for intentionality in integration. No post hoc rationalizations here! The process of constructing a self-designed concentration has been

steadily tightened in recent years, with ever-closer scrutiny of students' rationales in their Statement of Educational Objectives for their choice of focus hours. Seniors make the case to their peers in senior workshop as well as to their senior project advisers regarding which disciplines should be drawn on in their senior project and which lines of argument should be pursued and even for what thesis to state; techniques and strategies of integration are shared and critiqued. Five weeks are set aside just for revising the senior project so that students can make major adjustments in their thesis and its supporting arguments even after they have completed their rough draft.

The tension between Apollonian and Dionysian impulses, much like that between "a part of" and "apart from," has slowly lessened as Western has matured over the last thirty years. The dichotomies themselves have been challenged, the strength in each has been embraced, and an approach has been developed that goes far beyond a "yoke"—it creates a whole new way of viewing the world that integrates both perspectives. To a considerable extent, we can thank the students at Western for that approach. The faculty taught them about interdisciplinary study, but it has been the students who have generalized it into a way of life.

## Conclusion

Apollo and Dionysius have long been represented on university campuses. The ivory tower is itself a monument to Apollo, setting the academy apart from society precisely to gain clarity in reason through intellectual detachment. Students, however, experience the university as a dichotomy between the cognitive realm of the Apollonian classroom and the affective realm of Dionysian student culture, exemplified in so-called Greek life. For them, Apollo and Dionysius are not in tension so much as they are alternatives in conflict. Students are forced to make either/or choices. Shall I study or drink? Am I wearing my thinking cap or my party hat? Am I in college to learn or to have fun? In their view, traditional education pits the cognitive against the affective, and the structure of the university reifies that split by separating divisions of academic and student affairs, curricula for majors (career) and general education (the person), and courses that divorce thinking from feeling and experiencing.

The long-standing interdisciplinary programs presented here, often referred to as experimental education (Smith and McCann 2001) or cluster colleges (Gaff 1970) precisely because they bring Apollo and Dionysius into creative tension, represent a significant alternative to traditional higher education.



The debates among faculty members within these programs have been largely about the appropriate balance between Apollonian and Dionysian impulses—in the classroom, the curriculum, and the structures of the programs. How can we set up educational experiences that appropriately balance classroom and out-of-classroom activities? How can classrooms validate personal experience as well as course assignments? How do we construct a curriculum that is responsive to individual expression and interest as well as societal demands of disciplines and professions? How do we design academic structures, procedures, and requirements that guide students to a balance between Apollonian and Dionysian concerns?

Opposition to these interdisciplinary programs from other parts of the universities that house them has been recurrent and powerful, yet central administrators have come to recognize, if not appreciate, their contribution to the central mission of higher education. The most vociferous opposition has come from die-hard traditionalists who are thoroughly Apollonian, whereas the strongest support has come from those who have experienced the interdisciplinary program first-hand (alumni) or who have benefited from the fruits of its labors (parents and employers). It has been these people outside the academy, as much as or more than converts from within, who have convinced key administrators that these long-standing interdisciplinary programs should not only be protected, but even affirmed.

Interdisciplinarity has been a common and distinguishing feature of these programs, perhaps because it represents an approach that gives voice to conflicting perspectives while attempting to construct an understanding based on reconciling the tensions that exist between those perspectives. Interdisciplinarity, narrowly defined, adjudicates among disciplines, but of more interest here may be interdisciplinarity broadly defined (Newell 1999), an interdisciplinarity that draws on perspectives whatever their source (including Greek gods). When interdisciplinarity is understood more broadly, it becomes less surprising that faculty members in long-standing interdisciplinary programs have been reluctant to refine the definition of interdisciplinarity or to offer students explicit training in the interdisciplinary process. Precise definitions and explicit training smack of Apollo, while faculties feel the need to incorporate Dionysius as well. Instead, faculties have built up a set of informal and often unstated interdisciplinary practices that inform their teaching and advising, and thus inculcate the feeling that students develop for the interdisciplinary approach and its application to their education and lives.

Most long-standing interdisciplinary programs have adopted an approach to education that is individualized as well as interdisciplinary. Much as inter-

disciplinary study is a process that attempts to balance Dionysian and Apollonian perspectives, the individual is of necessity the locus of the tension that exists between those perspectives. Freedom from systematic and rigorous Apollonian structures—disciplines, lectures, pre-packaged majors—that stifle the Dionysian spirit has come through freer structures that mediate the balance between Apollo and Dionysius for the individual student—student-led seminars, service-learning, self-designed concentrations supported by a concentration seminar and a statement of educational objectives. Thus, interdisciplinarity and individualization are complementary approaches to the fundamental challenge of balancing the tension between Apollo and Dionysius.

What these long-standing interdisciplinary programs have demonstrated is the educational power of bringing the Apollonian and Dionysian approaches into creative tension. Each of the programs presented here has its own distinctive set of strategies for balancing those approaches, yet their alumni testify to their success in the near-fanaticism of their loyalty. Like the yoke of marriage between Apollonian and Dionysian tendencies that Nietzsche believed begot Attic tragedy, the yoke binding Apollonian and Dionysian approaches to interdisciplinary higher education has begot structures, practices, and policies that exhibit “the salient features of both,” even though the Apollonian form still only thinly veils Dionysian impulses. No matter the balance achieved, merely juxtaposing the Apollonian and Dionysian approaches, and developing interdisciplinary, individualized practices to harness the power of that tension, produces a transformative educational experience. Over the last dozen years, the leadership in higher education has come to value interdisciplinarity narrowly conceived, especially in the Apollonian pursuit of understanding and addressing complex societal problems. It is now time for the rest of higher education to appreciate the value of interdisciplinarity broadly conceived in transforming and integrating the human spirit.

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