

Bachelor of Integrated Studies Site Visit

January 31, 2017

External Review Report Submitted by: Dave Noack, Director of WSU Entrepreneurship Center, Allyson Saunders, Assistant Dean of College of EAST, Marianne McKnight, Associate Dean of History, Anthropology and Political Science at Salt Lake Community College.

The review team visited the Bachelor of Integrated Studies program at WSU on Tuesday, January 31, from 9:30 am until 4.30 pm. The team met with Associate Provost Brenda Kowalewski, advisors at Services for Students with Disabilities and the Student Success Center, Pat Wheeler in the Goddard Business School, students currently in the BIS program, and a group of faculty from across campus who regularly serve on BIS committees.

1. Introduction

The Bachelor of Integrated Studies (BIS) is an interdisciplinary degree that allows students to select three areas or emphases and work out a contract of courses with the departments of their choice. A final capstone project is required, which brings together the three areas of emphasis. The BIS Program serves the needs of students who want to individualize or create a unique academic program, students who want to obtain a broad education, and students who want to prepare for specific career goals and/or graduate school.

The 5-year program review committee noted the program's strengths and challenges and made recommendations for improvement.

2. Program strengths

The review committee observed and noted several strengths related to the BIS program and its leadership team. As such, the committee notes the following:

- a. The BIS program has tremendous value and support at all different levels at Weber State (Standard A: Mission).
- b. The Department's outreach to special populations is excellent and should be noted (Standard G: Relationships with External Communities).
- c. Colleagues interviewed felt there was a strong sense of mission and good chemistry between all interested parties—faculty, staff, advisors, and students (Standard A: Mission).

- d. The team noted excellent participation with colleagues representing entrepreneurship, student services, and career services as examples of BIS diverse stakeholders (Standard G: Relationships with External Communities).
- e. The team noted meaningful benchmark levels at 80% threshold for BIS Capstone Rubric indicators, and how the Department made informed responses and interventions for times when the 80% threshold was not met (Standard C: Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment).
- f. Data has been successfully and consistently used for program improvement (Standard H: Results of Previous Program Reviews).
- g. The value of collaborations between High Impact Practice directors and programs at Weber was noted and commended. These can be of great benefit for the University (Standard F: Program Support).
- h. The BIS Advisory Council provides good support and should continue (Standard F: Program Support).
- i. BIS's Program mission and outcomes are congruent with Weber State's mission and values and should be viewed as a valuable resource at the university level (Standard A: Mission).
- j. BIS participating faculty valued the capstone experience and working with students (Standard E: Faculty).
- k. BIS students valued tailoring their university experience via a BIS degree (Standard B: Curriculum).
- l. Interviewed BIS students all had different ways they heard about a BIS degree. The Department uses a variety of means to publicize the program and degree.
- m. The BIS website is very useful and user-friendly to advise, support, and recruit students.
- n. National trends support the role of BIS as a type of high-impact program (Standard A: Mission).

3. Program Challenges

- a. The BIS program repeatedly draws together multiple disciplines and resources from across campus creating a challenge to deliver a consistent experience for faculty, staff, and students. Each faculty brings his or her own experience and expectations into BIS committees. As such, the breadth and diversity of the program hinders any efforts to align expectations and procedures (Standard B: Curriculum and Standard C: Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment).
- b. The BIS program is nearly entirely an online experience, creating a challenge for students

to build peer support groups (Standard C: Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment).

- c. Faculty across campus receive little recognition from their college/department toward tenure and promotion, creating a bottleneck for the few faculty consistently willing to engage in BIS student projects and committees (Standard E: Faculty and Standard F: Program Support).

4. Areas where the program did not meet the Standards and why

The review committee did not find any areas that did meet the outlined Standards.

5. Recommendations for change

- a. The BIS program would benefit from additional marketing and branding efforts to unify its messaging to students, faculty, and staff.
- b. BIS participants heard about the program through various channels; however, effort could be made to disseminate more information through a variety of channels about the BIS program.
- c. BIS faculty members participate because of intrinsic rewards. Although this is commendable, the University should develop faculty incentives such as overload, pay per student committee, buy out of teaching load, or other institutional structures to support faculty and reinforce the value of working on BIS committees.
- d. The BIS Department should continue to “professionalize” the faculty/student mentoring experience through professional training (such as a Canvas course).
- e. Although the Capstone Rubric provides guidance and consistency for capstone evaluation, additional training (such as the above course) could help ensure greater uniformity for student/faculty expectations.
- f. BIS students would benefit from more precise capstone structures (such as peer support networks) and assignment benchmarks in BIS 4800.
- g. The BIS program serves a diverse student need including serving students who combine three program areas to meet a unique educational goal to serving students who are combining emphasis areas to graduate. The BIS program may find it helpful to have an introduction to the discipline and integrated studies philosophy at the beginning of BIS programs of study to assist students to better integrate the three areas of emphasis for career readiness or graduate work.
- h. The BIS program would benefit from follow-up data on graduates.