

March 15, 2004

To: Lou Anna K. Simon
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

From: June Pierce Youatt
Assistant Provost for Undergraduate Education

Re: Merging the Three Separate Integrative Studies Centers

Michigan State University is committed to providing a common, broad and coherent general education program for our undergraduate students. As a consequence of the deliberation that occurred as part of the Council for Review of Undergraduate Education (CRUE), MSU created the integrative studies program. The goals of integrative studies exceed those of general education programs which are constituted as a menu of disconnected, introductory, disciplinary courses. Rather, Integrative Studies at Michigan State University is a set of courses which provide seminal liberal arts content, while intentionally developing a range of student capacities necessary to connect learning across disciplines and to professional, social, and civic problems. Integrative studies courses draw from multiple disciplines, approaches, and materials; they explore subjects thematically and from multiple perspectives; they call on students to apply knowledge in real world problems and cases, linking the realms of knowledge, judgment, and action. Integrative studies courses are assumed to serve both as a foundation for further learning, and a context or framework with which further learning can take place.

Michigan State University is recognized as a national leader in developing integrative studies as an approach to general education. In 2003, MSU was named as one of 10 campuses nationally to be part of a Carnegie Foundation and AAC&U project on integrative learning. In 2001, the Hewlett Foundation funded a three-year project to support the development and implementation of faculty-designed program of classroom-embedded and programmatic assessment strategies in integrative studies.

While considerable talent, time, and resources have been invested in the integrative studies program, much work remains. Because almost all undergraduate students are required to complete the integrative studies

courses, and almost all faculty teach students who have been part of the program, there is on-going critique of the program. The recent focus conversations on the Future of the Liberal Arts and Sciences sharpened some of the criticisms and concerns about the program. These concerns need to be specifically addressed if MSU is to realize the vision and the potential of integrative studies, as conceptualized in the CRUE report.

Concerns articulated about integrative studies in commentary to date on the Future of the Liberal Arts and Sciences and on the *Realizing the Vision* blue print included:

- *inadequate attention to critical and emerging issues as a basis for thematic studies in integrative studies
- *under-utilization of distinguished, award winning faculty
- *involvement of a limited number of faculty from a limited number of departments
- *uneven quality across the areas of integrative studies and within the offerings in an area of integrative studies
- *uneven support for integrative studies across the three colleges currently responsible for integrative studies
- *uneven use of technology and other innovative teaching methods across the areas of integrative studies
- *rigidity in the delivery model of integrative studies (3 and 4 credit courses), creating difficulties in transfer and in study abroad options
- *purposes/outcomes which are not clearly understood by faculty or students
- *limited study abroad options
- *inadequate vertical or horizontal integration within integrative studies
- *disengagement of professional colleges from integrative studies program
- *inadequate articulation between integrative studies and professional majors
- *inadequate articulation between integrative studies and other general education requirements

*inadequate articulation between integrative studies courses and requirements, and the strength of departmental offerings

Building a stronger integrative studies program calls for greater coherence and articulation across disciplines and across the University. Creating a single, merged Center for Integrative Undergraduate Studies will facilitate that goal. A single Center has the potential to focus the work, resources, and purposes of integrative studies.

Thus, in advancing the initiative to strengthen the coherence and organization of the undergraduate experience at Michigan State University as a part of the *Realizing the Vision* blueprint, the formal consolidation of the three, separate, integrative studies centers into one center, jointly reporting to the liberal arts and sciences deans with oversight by the Assistant Provost for Undergraduate Education, should proceed immediately. A merged Center for Undergraduate Integrative Studies will yield increased coherence across the areas as well as a strengthened capacity to rethink better ways of balancing department and college and university obligations to our students, a combination of resources, increased visibility of the program, enhanced oversight and review of the program and its courses, more attention to connections among and across colleges, and focused development of new initiatives. Savings in administrative costs should be used to support Integrative Studies program initiatives.

Merging the three centers, however, is not adequate to meet the goals of a consolidated center unless there is deliberate attention to the current concerns about and potential for integrative studies. Thus, I am recommending that an initial Review Committee be charged with a set of tasks which will serve as a platform for the merged center.

In anticipation of and in preparation for a July 1, 2004 effective date for the establishment of the Center for Undergraduate Integrative Studies, the Office of the Provost will convene a faculty review committee charged to complete the following tasks by May 31, 2004:

- Assess current level of resources supporting integrative studies across all three centers and colleges
- Review summary of the status of the current program
- Assess campus-wide support and potential resources for the development of integrative studies
- Identify a process for recruiting a cohort of faculty to provide intellectual leadership for integrative studies. These faculty form a collective, not only of those faculty who regularly teach integrative studies courses, but also of faculty who tend to the balance and array of courses across the different domains. This faculty leadership team would commence their work summer, 2004, focusing particularly on curricular review,

innovation, IS partnerships, and faculty recruitment, and opportunities for scholarship around integrative studies.

Initially, and in a transition mode, a short term advisory team of the three existing directors and a group of faculty will work over the summer to identify and move through the most important issues and develop the possibilities of the newly merged center.

As we have discussed, the Office of the Provost will provide the usual resources to support the work of the task force and work groups