6/22/21

**Bachelor of University Studies Summary**

*Program Overview*

The Bachelor of University Studies (BUS) program at the inception was "to enable students in the university who are interested in a major beyond those now offered to help define and plan their academic careers from courses offered in the university as a whole." The program allows students to propose and pursue an individualized, interdisciplinary major not otherwise achievable within the current structure of the University. Each student is required to submit a proposal which consists of a narrative, a course list, a faculty mentor support letter and a copy of transcripts. The areas of study are meant to be prospective rather than retroactive and be a rigorous educational pathway that prepares students for additional schooling or a career.

BUS proposals are reviewed and approved by the University Studies Committee, a ten-member faculty committee selected by the Personnel and Elections Committee of the Academic Senate. Two committee meetings are scheduled each Fall and Spring semesters, where the student/faculty advisor team is asked to come and present their proposal with the committee and answer any additional questions. If a majority of the committee approves the proposal, then the student academic pathway is entered into the degree audit system. If a majority does not approve then students are encouraged to revise and resubmit.

*Student Activities*

During the 2020-2021 academic year, we say a sharp drop off of proposals. This is in no doubt due to COVID and the uncertainty that it brought with

students focus, hesitancy to risk, and a lack of connection on campus. A total of 9 proposals were reviewed and all except 1 was approved. During the first review in September, we reviewed one proposal and the student was rejected for the second time. We worked with the student to find an alternative pathway to graduation. During the November meeting, we reviewed five proposals and all were approved.

During the February meeting, the committee reviewed 1 proposal, and it was approved. In the April meeting, one student presented a proposal and it was approved.

We have worked with a representative from Biology about the issues with the Anatomy and Physiology pathway and have resolved some of the issues to ensure that this is a unique offering and does not overlap with other pathways in Biology. Continued discussions will be necessary.

In general, the committee felt that the proposals that were received were above average and suggested that some of our efforts to provide better advising and guidance to students was effective.

*Administrative Activities*

From an administrative perspective, the program is stable and effective. We have a good system to obtain proposals and distribute them out for review. As mentioned before, we saw a sharp decline in the number of applicants this year. The committee discussed this and we all felt that this was due to COVID and not indicative of any other issues. We will continue to monitor so that we can make corrections or any needed adjustments.

After doing quite a bit of work on developing and initiating a fundraising campaign, Erica Marken the fundraising director left Undergraduate Studies. We will work with the new director to jumpstart this activity again so that we can provide additional scholarship monies for our students.

In the previous report, we mentioned that we made two minor adjustments to the proposal and completion of their degree. One adjustment will require the students to reference other programs that may be similar to theirs from other institutions in their proposals. This has given the committee and the students some additional perspective and puts their program in context of a broader educational landscape. In addition, we have seen better selection of courses as a result of getting this broader perspective and some concrete examples of coursework.

In addition, we have added the requirement for all BUS students, going forward, that they present in the UROP symposium. We had a couple of students who presented at the virtual symposium this summer. As we recover from the COVID restrictions we will certainly see the number of BUS participating students increase.

We are working with Mark St. Andre to create a set of flexible learning outcomes for the BUS program that aligns with the Learning Framework.

COVID-19 Response

In response to the COVID-19 crisis we had to make adjustments to our final proposal presentation format. We held these meetings online via Zoom and it went very well. In the future, we will hold these via Zoom and for those that want to participate in person.

*Goals*

We still hope to submit the paperwork to change the name to Bachelor of Interdisciplinary studies. In addition, we will resume our discussions with the Graduate School to set up a Master’s of Interdisciplinary Studies degree with the Graduate School.

We will continue to refine our process and communication. We will begin to update the website with a number of changes that clarify some reoccurring questions and provide a FAQ.

*Budget*

Currently, the BUS program has no budget. UGS provides support for the advisors through internal funding mechanisms.

*Degree Titles*

Anatomy and Physiology

Nutritional Science

Digital Transformation and Optimization

Pre-Psychiatry and Behavioral Neuroscience

International Outdoor Technical Leadership