

**COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION FOR
Graduate School
Interdisciplinary Studies Graduate Programs**

The interdisciplinary graduate degrees include the INDS:

- MA
- MS
- PhD

STRENGTHS:

- Involvement of a diverse group of faculty including faculty on committees
- Brings faculty together across disciplines
- Follows national trends to offer interdisciplinary opportunities
- Alaska and the Arctic are central to much of the research done by INDS graduate students.
- Rigor of admission process: over the five years, the council admitted 50 PhD students, denied 23 applications and 17 applications were withdrawn.
- Surveys indicate a high level of satisfaction among students and employers.
- Graduates have strong job placement rates.
- The main costs are in faculty time for the committee work. This is not much more time-consuming though than if the faculty were on a dissertation committee in an established traditional PhD program.
- The interdisciplinary nature of the degree can lead to very interesting research work facilitated by faculty working together across disciplines.

WEAKNESSES:

- Lack of student cohesion due to the absence of a clear cohort
- Program assessment
 - No ongoing comprehensive assessment of the entire program
 - Outcomes Assessments have been developed but have not been implemented.
 - Tracking interdisciplinary students is challenging
- The master's degree is likely to be high-cost in terms of the student and faculty involvement to set up the degree with less apparent benefit. There are many more established masters degrees than doctorate degrees and thus likely less demand to create a new path. For the number of students to grow in this degree it needs to be more structured and easier to establish.

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Nationwide movement to interdisciplinary degrees
- Increasing external funding support for interdisciplinary degrees
- Incubating interdisciplinary department-based programs
- Increasing Master's enrollment (changes likely need to be made for this to happen)

- With the continued interest in moving UAF into tier 1 status these degrees are very important.

THREATS:

- Instability at UAF – the capacity problem is growing due to smaller numbers of PhD faculty.

CENTRALITY TO MISSION:

The program allows students to pursue pathways that fulfill their own educational goals and often their degrees are focused on areas of importance to Alaska and the North.

INDICATORS OF QUALITY:

The University of Alaska Fairbanks' (UAF) graduate interdisciplinary programs allow students to design a unique, or individual, program of study to meet their goals. The program offers MA, MS, and PhD degrees. Students draw upon UAF's strengths in interdisciplinary research and education in Arctic and remote regions research. The important program allows students to pursue research and scholarship in areas where degrees are not offered by existing programs at UAF. The graduate interdisciplinary program is administered by the graduate school and supported by UAF faculty and departments.

This program hosts 18% of all enrolled PhD students and the largest percentage of PhD graduates of all majors (19%). The PhD has a higher proportion of Alaska Native students (14%) than the overall graduate student population (10%) than UAF as a whole. Over the past five years, students have graduated from the CEM (6 PhD, 8 MS), CFOS (1 MA), CLA (10 PhD, 1 MA), CNSM (10 PhD, 1 MS, and 1 MA), School of Education (8 PhD), SOM (5 PhD), and SNRE (3 PhD). For the Interdisciplinary PhD students, 40% of the committees are co-chaired compared to 27% for disciplinary PhD students

The interdisciplinary PhD program is the only one of its kind in the state of Alaska. Interdisciplinary MA and MS programs are also offered at the University of Alaska Anchorage.

COST-EFFECTIVENESS:

Majors

Metric	Detail	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20
Majors	MA Interdisciplinary Studies	4	1	0	1	0
Majors	MS Interdisciplinary Studies	9	6	5	2	1
Majors	PHD Interdisciplinary Studies	61	66	67	60	54

Degrees

Metric	Detail	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20
Degrees	MA Interdisciplinary Studies	2	1	0	0	0

Degrees	MS Interdisciplinary Studies	2	2	0	1	0
Degrees	PHD Interdisciplinary Studies	4	10	9	8	8

The Director's report estimated graduate tuition to be approximately \$500,000 per year and direct graduate school costs to administer the programs is estimated to be \$65,000 per year. A larger portion of the costs would come with the dissertation and thesis committee's time. There is also the cost of teaching the graduate courses but the marginal costs of that may be low as a majority of them would be taught anyway.

While the overall recommendation is continuation, there are some potential areas for improvement. The Director recommends that the program strengthen student cohesion and retention by implementing a program course requirement in interdisciplinary principles and practices; increase enrollment, retention, and graduation rates by implementing comprehensive assessment and analysis, including student learning outcomes assessments; continue to incubate interdisciplinary programs that meet state needs; and review the MA and MS programs and consider development of structured MA and MS degree paths to increase enrollment.

Interdisciplinary MA

RECOMMENDATION:	ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:	DATE FOR FOLLOW-UP:
Continuation: 6 votes		
Continuation w/ improvement plan: 1 vote		
Abstain: 1 vote		

Interdisciplinary MS

RECOMMENDATION:	ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:	DATE FOR FOLLOW-UP:
Continuation: 6 votes		
Continuation w/ improvement plan: 1 vote		
Abstain: 1 vote		

Interdisciplinary PhD

RECOMMENDATION:	ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:	DATE FOR FOLLOW-UP:
Continuation: 6 votes		
Continuation w/ improvement plan: 1 vote		
Abstain: 1 vote		