6/29/20

**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.

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. Multiple committee meetings are scheduled each Fall and Spring semesters, where the student/faculty advisor team is asked to come and discuss their proposal with the committee.

*Student Activities*

During the 2019-2020 academic year, we had a total of 16 proposals reviewed and all were approved. During the first review in September, we reviewed five proposals. During the November meeting, we reviewed five proposals and all were approved.

During the February meeting, the committee reviewed 4 proposals, and all swere accepted. However, during this meeting a particular issue was brought up about students who complete the Anatomy and Physiology pathway. Further discussions will be Biology have been scheduled to discuss how to make this work for all parties and ensure that no competition is present. In the April meeting, two students presented the proposals and their proposals were approved.

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.

Alexander Becraft, a BUS student studying “Social Entrepreneurship” was awarded the prestigious Ivory Student Leadership Award for 2019-2020.

*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. We are seeing the number of students applying for the program slightly increase and the quality of the proposals and student applicants remain very high.

We initiated and completed a fundraising campaign to provide discretionary money to support students in their activities as a BUS student. After some high expectations we were unable to raise any additional money from BUS alumni. After discussions with Erica Marken we determined that we were unable to raise any money because we had not built a relationship with the alumni. We have now started to strategize about sending out semesterly updates on student projects and student degree plans. Then next year we will ask for money again.

We were able to obtain $3000 for student scholarships this year from the Parent Fund. This money was distributed to 3 deserving BUS students who had applied for the BUS Rice Scholarship. This brings the total of students receiving some sort of scholarship to 4.

We have made two minor adjustments to the programs on the student side. One adjustment will require the students to reference other programs that may be similar to theirs from other institutions in their proposals. The hope is that this gives some additional perspective and puts their program in context of a broader educational landscape. In addition, we hope that the course selection will be influenced by this broader perspective and be even more focused and strategic.

In addition, we have added the requirement for all BUS students, going forward, that they present in the UROP symposium. This will give them a venue for their BUS thesis/project and also provide a culminating experience for their degree. This has been discussed and planned with Rachael Hayes-Harb.

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 this online via Zoom and it went very well. In the future, we will probably hold this via Zoom in the short term and then offer it as an alternative in the future. In addition, we had to make some changes to student’s final projects because many could not get back to campus to finalize projects, theses, or performances. However, the disruption was not significant and were able to easily adapt.

*Goals*

In the fall we will submit the paperwork to change the name to Bachelor of Interdisciplinary studies. We have begun work on the Master’s of Interdisciplinary Studies degree with the Graduate School. We are preparing this to be submitted for approval in during the Fall semester with the change of name.

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. Because we are fundraising, we are not requesting a budget for the 2018 – 2019 fiscal year.