Mission / Purpose
The Interdisciplinary Studies program offers a flexible and rigorous curriculum that draws upon and integrates knowledge from multiple disciplines and that is designed for varied intellectual and career interests. Offering careful mentoring, advising, and program planning for students, IDS also engages students in complex problem solving and advanced research.

Based on best practices in interdisciplinary pedagogy and current theories of interdisciplinary study and research, the Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies at The University of Southern Mississippi requires a three-level sequence of IDS courses. At the end of this sequence, students will produce a significant capstone project that integrates their disciplinary interests and prepares them to meet the professional and intellectual needs of contemporary society.

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Targets, Findings, and Action Plans

SLO 1: Drawing on Disciplinary Sources
Students will show evidence of understanding the discipline or disciplines being used (e.g. the relevant questions, perspectives, assumptions, methods and knowledge).

Related Measures:

M 1: Exit survey
Students will complete an exit survey in the Capstone class in which they will evaluate their understanding of and ability to execute the central concepts of interdisciplinary writing and research, along with their professional preparedness.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

Target:
Upon exiting the program, 75% of students will indicate "agree" or "strongly agree" that they understand the differences between and the epistemological assumptions of various academic disciplines.

Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met
In spring of 2014 (the first semester the exit survey was implemented), 100% of students (13/13) "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that the program provided them with an understanding of the differences between various academic disciplines.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):
For full information, see the Details of Action Plans section of this report.

Survey design and implementation
Established in Cycle: 2012-2013
We will design this survey for implementation beginning in the fall of 2013.

M 2: Capstone Interdisciplinary Research Project (IRP)
In IDS 402, the program capstone, students will execute a final capstone project that will demonstrate their understanding of and ability to design/perform interdisciplinary research and analysis. The final paper will be assessed using a 10-point rubric informed by best practices in interdisciplinary assessment and by our programmatic outcomes.
Target:
70% of students will earn a score of 7 ("Competent/Milestone") or higher on the 10-point rubric program-designed rubric in the area of effective use of sources from multiple disciplines.

Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met
In Fall 2013, 95% (18/19) of students were given a score of 7 or higher on the 10-point rubric in the area of drawing on sources in varying disciplines.
In Spring 2014, 76% (29/38) of students were given a score of 7 or higher on the 10-point rubric in the area of drawing on sources in varying disciplines.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):
For full information, see the Details of Action Plans section of this report.
Rubric design and data collection
Established in Cycle: 2012-2013
We will begin collecting data this summer (2013) and will design the rubric for implementation in the fall semester.
Curriculum/Assessment Plan Improvement
Established in Cycle: 2013-2014
The program met all of its assessment targets for the 2013-2014 cycle. This suggests that improvements made over the past two y

SLO 2: Critical Argumentation
The student will demonstrate the ability to advance knowledge or construct an argument by defining the problem, supporting major assertions, and reflection on both the limitations and merits of their own approaches and work, and the limitations and merits of the discipline's approaches.

Related Measures:

M 1: Exit survey
Students will complete an exit survey in the Capstone class in which they will evaluate their understanding of and ability to execute the central concepts of interdisciplinary writing and research, along with their professional preparedness.

Target:
Upon exiting the program, 75% of students will "agree" or "strongly agree" that they have developed competency in executing written critical arguments.

Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met
In spring of 2014 (the first semester the exit survey was implemented), 100% of students (13/13) "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that the program had helped them develop competency in written critical arguments.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):
For full information, see the Details of Action Plans section of this report.
Survey design and implementation
Established in Cycle: 2012-2013
We will design this survey for implementation beginning in the fall of 2013.

M 2: Capstone Interdisciplinary Research Project (IRP)
In IDS 402, the program capstone, students will execute a final capstone project that will demonstrate their understanding of and ability to design/perform interdisciplinary research and analysis. The final
paper will be assessed using a 10-point rubric informed by best practices in interdisciplinary assessment and by our programmatic outcomes.

Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

**Target:**
70% of students will earn a score of 7 ("Competent/Milestone") or higher on the 10-point rubric program-designed rubric in the area of critical argumentation.

**Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met**
In Fall 2013, 89% (17/19) of students were given a score of 7 or higher on the 10-point rubric in the area of critical argumentation. In Spring 2014, 94% (16/17) of students were given a score of 7 or higher on the 10-point rubric in the area of critical argumentation.

**Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):**
For full information, see the Details of Action Plans section of this report.

**Rubric design and data collection**
*Established in Cycle:* 2012-2013
We will begin collecting data this summer (2013) and will design the rubric for implementation in the fall semester.

**Curriculum/Assessment Plan Improvement**
*Established in Cycle:* 2013-2014
The program met all of its assessment targets for the 2013-2014 cycle. This suggests that improvements made over the past two y...

**SLO 3: Multidisciplinary Perspectives**
Students will demonstrate an ability to explore a topic from different perspectives, fully considering each discipline's contribution to the topic at hand.

**Related Measures:**

**M 1: Exit survey**
Students will complete an exit survey in the Capstone class in which they will evaluate their understanding of and ability to execute the central concepts of interdisciplinary writing and research, along with their professional preparedness.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

**Target:**
Upon exiting the program, 75% of students will "agree" or "strongly agree" they have learned to consider objects of study from multiple disciplinary perspectives.

**Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met**
In spring of 2014 (the first semester the exit survey was implemented), 100% of students (13/13) "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that the program taught them to consider objects of study from multiple disciplinary perspectives.

**Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):**
For full information, see the Details of Action Plans section of this report.

**Survey design and implementation**
*Established in Cycle:* 2012-2013
We will design this survey for implementation beginning in the fall of 2013.

**M 2: Capstone Interdisciplinary Research Project (IRP)**
In IDS 402, the program capstone, students will execute a final capstone project that will demonstrate their understanding of and ability to design/perform interdisciplinary research and analysis. The final
paper will be assessed using a 10-point rubric informed by best practices in interdisciplinary assessment and by our programmatic outcomes.

Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

**Target:**
70% of students will earn a score of 7 ("Competent/Milestone") or higher on the 10-point rubric program-designed rubric in the area that assesses substantive engagement of multidisciplinary perspectives.

**Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met**
In Fall 2013, 95% (18/19) of students were given a score of 7 or higher on the 10-point rubric in the area that assesses substantive engagement of multidisciplinary perspectives. In Spring 2014, 76% (29/38) of students were given a score of 7 or higher on the 10-point rubric in the area that assesses substantive engagement of multidisciplinary perspectives.

**Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):**
For full information, see the *Details of Action Plans* section of this report.

**Rubric design and data collection**
*Established in Cycle:* 2012-2013
We will begin collecting data this summer (2013) and will design the rubric for implementation in the fall semester.

**Curriculum/Assessment Plan Improvement**
*Established in Cycle:* 2013-2014
The program met all of its assessment targets for the 2013-2014 cycle. This suggests that improvements made over the past two y...

**SLO 4: Interdisciplinary Integration**
Students will draw on disciplinary perspectives and integrate their insights through the construction of a more comprehensive perspective.

**Related Measures:**

**M 1: Exit survey**
Students will complete an exit survey in the Capstone class in which they will evaluate their understanding of and ability to execute the central concepts of interdisciplinary writing and research, along with their professional preparedness.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

**Target:**
Upon exiting the program, 75% of students will "agree" or "strongly agree" that they have developed competence in integrating and synthesizing knowledge from multiple disciplines.

**Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met**
In spring of 2014 (the first semester the exit survey was implemented), 100% of students (13/13) "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that they had developed competence in integrating and synthesizing knowledge from multiple disciplines.

**Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):**
For full information, see the *Details of Action Plans* section of this report.

**Survey design and implementation**
*Established in Cycle:* 2012-2013
We will design this survey for implementation beginning in the fall of 2013.
M 2: Capstone Interdisciplinary Research Project (IRP)
In IDS 402, the program capstone, students will execute a final capstone project that will demonstrate their understanding of and ability to design/perform interdisciplinary research and analysis. The final paper will be assessed using a 10-point rubric informed by best practices in interdisciplinary assessment and by our programmatic outcomes.

Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

**Target:**
70% of students will earn a score of 7 ("Competent/Milestone") or higher on the 10-point program-designed rubric in the area of synthesizing and integrating multiple disciplines.

**Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met**
In Fall 2013, 89% (17/19) students scored a 7 or higher in the area of synthesizing and integrating multiple disciplines; in Spring 2014, 86% (33/38) scored a 7 or higher in the area of synthesizing and integrating multiple disciplines.

**Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):**
For full information, see the Details of Action Plans section of this report.

Rubric design and data collection
*Established in Cycle: 2012-2013*
We will begin collecting data this summer (2013) and will design the rubric for implementation in the fall semester.

Curriculum/Assessment Plan Improvement
*Established in Cycle: 2013-2014*
The program met all of its assessment targets for the 2013-2014 cycle. This suggests that improvements made over the past two y...

SLO 5: Professional Preparedness
Students will demonstrate preparedness to enter and succeed in the workforce and/or in a post-baccalaureate program (e.g. graduate, medical, law school).

**Related Measures:**

M 1: Exit survey
Students will complete an exit survey in the Capstone class in which they will evaluate their understanding of and ability to execute the central concepts of interdisciplinary writing and research, along with their professional preparedness.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

**Target:**
Upon exiting the program, 80% of students will "agree" or "strongly agree" that the program has prepared them well to enter the workforce and/or a post-baccalaureate program (e.g. law, medical, or graduate school).

**Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met**
In spring of 2014 (the first semester the exit survey was implemented), 92% of students (12/13) "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that the program had prepared them to enter the workforce and/or a post-baccalaureate program.

**Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):**
For full information, see the Details of Action Plans section of this report.
Survey design and implementation
Established in Cycle: 2012-2013
We will design this survey for implementation beginning in the fall of 2013.

M 3: Resume/Cover letter
In IDS 402, students will be required to identify a job advertisement, internship, or professional opportunity and to craft a resume and cover letter for the same.

Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

Target:
70% of students will earn a score of 7 ("Competent/Milestone") or higher on the 10-point program-designed rubric on the resume assignment.

Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met
In Fall 2013, 86% (6/7) of students earned a score of 7 or higher on the 10-point rubric; in Spring 2014, 87% (33/38) of students earned a score of 7 or higher.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):
For full information, see the Details of Action Plans section of this report.

Assignment development and data collection
Established in Cycle: 2012-2013
We will develop and begin to use the assignment in the fall of 2013, and begin to collect data on the results.

Rubric design and data collection
Established in Cycle: 2012-2013
We will design a new assessment rubric this summer and begin collecting data in the fall.

Other Outcomes/Objectives, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Targets, Findings, and Action Plans

O/O 6: Retention and Graduation of Students
Retention and graduation of students enrolled in the program.

Related Measures:

M 4: Retention of Students
Retention of students from previous fall to fall term of assessment year. Data drawn from IR: http://www.usmir.org/campus/retention/PR_5years_outcome_by_Program_F06_F12.pdf

Source of Evidence: Existing data

Target:
60% of students will have been retained in the program, or graduated with a degree in the program, between fall of the prior year and fall of the assessed year.

Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met
Data from Institutional Research shows that between Fall 12 and Fall 13, the program retained 87 (32%) and graduated 109 (40.1%) of its original 272 enrolled students. Thus 72.1% of students were either retained, or awarded a degree, in the program.

M 5: Four Year degree awarded rate
Rate of enrolled students attaining a degree in the program after four years. Data drawn from IR: http://www.usmir.org/campus/retention/PR_5years_outcome_by_Program_F06_F12.pdf

Source of Evidence: Existing data
Target:
60% of enrolled students will have attained a degree in the program after four years.

Findings (2013-2014) - Target: Met
Data from Institutional Research shows that of 87 students enrolled in the program in Fall 09, 69% had been awarded a degree in the program four years later.

Details of Action Plans for This Cycle (by Established cycle, then alpha)

Assignment development and data collection
We will develop and begin to use the assignment in the fall of 2013, and begin to collect data on the results.

Established in Cycle: 2012-2013
Implementation Status: In-Progress
Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):
Measure: Resume/Cover letter | Outcome/Objective: Professional Preparedness

Rubric design and data collection
We will begin collecting data this summer (2013) and will design the rubric for implementation in the fall semester.

Established in Cycle: 2012-2013
Implementation Status: Finished
Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):
Measure: Capstone Interdisciplinary Research Project (IRP) | Outcome/Objective: Critical Argumentation | Drawing on Disciplinary Sources | Interdisciplinary Integration | Multidisciplinary Perspectives

Rubric design and data collection
We will design a new assessment rubric this summer and begin collecting data in the fall.

Established in Cycle: 2012-2013
Implementation Status: In-Progress
Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):
Measure: Resume/Cover letter | Outcome/Objective: Professional Preparedness

Responsible Person/Group: Ellen Weinauer

Survey design and implementation
We will design this survey for implementation beginning in the fall of 2013.

Established in Cycle: 2012-2013
Implementation Status: Finished
Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):
Measure: Exit survey | Outcome/Objective: Critical Argumentation | Drawing on Disciplinary Sources | Interdisciplinary Integration | Multidisciplinary Perspectives | Professional Preparedness

Test Design and Implementation
We will design a pre- and post-test for implementation beginning in the fall of 2013.
Curriculum/Assessment Plan Improvement

The program met all of its assessment targets for the 2013-2014 cycle. This suggests that improvements made over the past two years have been successful in helping students attain the learning outcomes specified by the faculty for the program as a whole. However, looking at learning outcomes achieved across the three core courses (IDS 301, 401 and 402) reveals that while students achieve these outcomes by the end of the program, their path towards this outcome is uneven. We will continue to look for ways to achieve consistency in learning outcomes across sections and delivery methods of the various courses, and ensure smooth progression towards program learning outcomes. We will also examine how to recalibrate our assessment plan in order to better capture student progress as they move through the program.

Established in Cycle: 2013-2014
Implementation Status: Planned
Priority: High
Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):
Measure: Capstone Interdisciplinary Research Project (IRP) | Outcome/Objective: Critical Argumentation |
| Drawing on Disciplinary Sources | Interdisciplinary Integration | Multidisciplinary Perspectives
Implementation Description: Faculty will meet early in the new academic year to consider assessment results and discuss curricular goals for the year ahead.
Responsible Person/Group: Marek Steedman

Analysis Questions and Analysis Answers

What specifically did your assessments show regarding proven strengths or progress you made on outcomes/objectives?
We are pleased with what our programmatic assessments show with regard to students' performance in our program: all of the targets that we have established were met in the past year, although we clearly have more work to do (see below). While our assessment of students in our Writing Intensive course show that early in our program, students lack the writing and research skills they need, we are pleased to see that by the time they get to the final project in the capstone class (the source of our direct measures at this point), they have highly developed skills and an understanding of the nature of interdisciplinary writing and research. We are also pleased to see that students believe the program prepares them well as writers and researchers and paves the way for them to enter the workforce or a graduate and professional program.

What specifically did your assessments show regarding any outcomes/objectives that will require continued attention?
While our students performed well overall and while our assessment measures are tied specifically to principles of and best practices in interdisciplinary learning, research, and writing, we are committed to digging more deeply into both our assessment measures and our ways of gauging achievement. Only in the 14-15 academic year will we have an instructional corps that is large enough to manage both the size of the student body in IDS (hovering around 250 students) and the assessment responsibilities. In short, we believe that our assessment mechanisms could be more developed and responsive, and that at last the program has a large enough faculty to begin to undertake such development. We are committed to adding more direct measures to our assessment tools, because we recognize that relying primarily on one assignment (the capstone research paper) and an exit survey, we are gauging performance too narrowly. Additional, more distinct, and more specific measures will allow us to determine more precisely our program's strengths and weaknesses.

Annual Report Section Responses

Program Summary
The BIS program has developed by leaps and bounds over the last year. From a program that was swamped by its own rapid growth and lacked a full time director and sufficient staff, it has gained full time faculty, been
approved for departmental status, and completely revised its degree plan. All of this has been under the guidance of a faculty Advisory Group that has kept in mind long-term goals for the program as well as the contributions it can make in furthering the university's core mission and vision. The program is becoming more visible and more highly regarded on campus as it has undertaken these systematic initiatives, and we are also seeing improvement in the quality of the students who seek acceptance into the major. Beginning with the 14-15 bulletin, all new IDS students will be required to take a one-hour course (IDS 201), the final product of which is a degree plan that requires the student to intentionally articulate his/her educational and career goals and explain the rationale behind his/her course of study. Additionally, all IDS students will be required to supplement the three core IDS classes (301, 401, and 402) with an IDS Special Topics course (IDS 350) and to take either Advanced Composition (Eng 332) or Technical Writing (Eng 333). Finally, we have moved the Computer Competency requirement to courses outside of IDS, freeing time in the IDS 301 foundations class to paving the way for advanced research and writing.

As our program advances, so too do our students: we have established a local chapter of the national Honors Society (Alpha Iota Sigma) and will send a representative from that group to the Association for Interdisciplinary Studies international conference in November. Additionally, three of our students will present work developed in their IDS 301 class at the Popular Culture/American Culture Association conference in the spring of 2015. These successes indicate that we are headed in the right direction(s), and we look forward to further growth and development in the year(s) ahead.

Continuous Improvement Initiatives
We have many improvement initiatives planned for the year ahead. While we are likely to retain our learning outcomes, we will

(1) turn our attention more specifically to the new "student achievement" outcome for this year (SACS FR4.1).
(2) refine our assessment plan in such a way as to fold in additional direct measures so that we do not over-rely on the capstone research class and the exit survey (as we acknowledge we do here).
(3) develop an entrance/exit exam so that we could measure more objectively students' understanding of core interdisciplinary concepts from their entrance into and graduation from the program; we have not had the capacity to develop that test because of both staffing limitations and some residual inconsistency in the core classes, but we hope to be prepared to do that in the year ahead.
(4) continue discussions intended to bring consistency to course outcomes and the measures used to assess them--discussions that will obviously filter into the programmatic assessments as well.
(5) do more to track our alumni. Knowing where our alumni are and how they got there will help us gather data about job placement rates and/or rates of entrance into advanced professional/graduate programs, and also know how to fine-tune the program.
(6) watch closely to see whether the new degree plan succeeds in better preparing our students to move through the program and graduate with the research and writing skills interdisciplinary work entails and requires.

Closing the Loop
As we reflect on the past year, we see the ways in which assessment guided curricular and programmatic initiatives. We note that last year's report essentially built from the ground up; we had little data to report and no solid form in which to report it. Last year, we presented an assessment plan; upon reflection in the early spring, we realized that while the learning outcomes were appropriate, the targets we had established were correlated to an assessment tool that was too cumbersome. We streamlined and simplified our targets--not lowering rates of achievement, but making it easier to gauge achievement. In short, we improved the assessment plan. We also improved our strategies for data collection and our rubrics. In short, we continued building the foundation for programmatic assessment--and we now have a tool that we believe is in the main points effective. All but one of our action plans went from "planned" to either "finished" or "in progress"; the only exception is the design of an entrance/exit survey, to which we hope to turn our attention in the year ahead. While our capstone rubric is reported as having been "finished," we recognize that we will continue to revise and refine our assessment instruments so that we are able to gauge our students' achievement of learning outcomes reliably and accurately.