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Convergence

A publication for students and alumni of DePaul University's MALS and IDS Programs
Winter/Spring 2015

Reshaping MALS/IDS: Defining our Terms

Susan Jacobs, Associate Director

As a result of ongoing internal and external reviews, DePaul's MALS/IDS program has actively worked to re-define our concept of interdisciplinary studies to better reflect higher education trends and the academic/professional goals of our diverse students. By its very nature, the concept of interdisciplinary studies is dynamic. Our unique program offers graduate students opportunities to explore both the intellectual and practical connectivity of multiple disciplines that combine to create exciting new applications.

Prospective MALS/IDS students often ask "Is this the program where you can do anything you want?" Our external reviewers asked us to differentiate between "Interdisciplinarity," "Interdisciplinary Studies," and "Multi-Discipline Studies." Many programs use the

terms interchangeably. Here are our working answers and definitions, via our own program reflections.

Is this the program where you can do anything you want?

"Yes, but..." begins a rather complex answer. MALS/IDS offers non-traditional, highly individualized paths through rigorous graduate studies. Unlike other programs where the core curriculum offers already-constructed courses that combine elements of multiple disciplines, MALS and IDS students can take courses throughout most areas of the university in their self-constructed programs. MALS/IDS students follow rigorous guidelines, and must support their proposals with specific Statements of Academic Purpose (SAP) to justify their List of Courses (LOC). They understand they will be taking courses with students who are probably already steeped in

"The Interdisciplinary Studies Program at DePaul does more than grant me the freedom to write what I want. As an IDS student, I am **granted the agency to mold my curriculum into a degree custom-made for my specific interests.**"

- Megan Metzger

"Liberal Studies has the potential to be **radical, transformative, engaging and uplifting.**

It has the ability to grow roots and wings. It fosters an integrative understanding of the world. There is a form of integrity that is embedded into Liberal Studies. This integrity resists the standardization of the streamline education between its proclivity for spontaneity and connection."

-Natalie Trevino

discipline-specific methodology.

A way to sum up our answer to the above question is "Yes, as long as you meet university requirements, have met any departmental prerequisites, and have the academic discipline to succeed in serious graduate-level studies." For example, if a MALS/IDS student wants to take courses in Kellstadt, a GIS course in Geography and a Sociology course requiring statistical analysis, we work with the student and the specific departments to facilitate course enrollment, but we also want to make sure that our students are prepared to succeed in each course. **[Continued on p. 7]**

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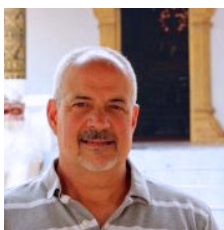
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Director's Letter



Hello Friends,

Every ten years, all academic programs at DePaul (and at every accredited university in the United States) undergo a formal Academic Program Review. This process requires us to measure our program's success in both quantitative and qualitative ways. We look at our program's curriculum, faculty, and student learning outcomes in comparison with similar programs in the region and across the country. We conduct surveys to discover student and alumni/ae perceptions of their educational experience. We reflect on the data we have collected and develop a narrative about where we've been and where we need to go to insure that our program meets student needs. A crucial step involves the site visit by external reviewers, professors from other universities who have experience with many programs like ours, and who can give us a broader perspective on how we're doing. We'll be sharing the results of our research more fully with the MALS & IDS community, but I wanted to highlight some of the more interesting results:

■ MALS & IDS students and alums responded to the survey at a much higher rate (44% alums, 36% students) than the standard response rate (24%).

■ MALS & IDS students were eager to share their high level of satisfaction with their programs-- consistently over 80%--as compared with the 40-60% overall satisfaction of DePaul students in general, including DePaul graduate students.

■ While undergraduate self-designed programs are fairly widespread, only five graduate programs in North America allow the flexibility of DePaul's IDS program.

Finally, we'll share this excerpt from the "Students and Alumni" section of the external reviewers' report:

During the campus visit, an impressive number of current graduate students, recent alumni, and even older alumni were not only willing but quite happy to take time out to come to campus and discuss their experiences in the program. These students and alumni had almost nothing but the most positive things to say about the MALS and IDS programs. They plainly were reporting back to us from some of the most meaningful intellectual experiences and personal journeys of their lives. If there had been a video camera rolling during our meetings with these individuals, DePaul would have walked away with very appealing and impressive marketing footage packed with moving and memorable quotations. This was stirring testimony, and most of the things these many individuals praised in the two open sessions were echoed by others, confirming our sense of the validity of their praise.

Of course, both our own self-study and the external reviewers' reports identify a number of areas that could use improvement, and we will address these in the Memorandum of Understanding. But the multi-year process of Academic Program Review has helped us to understand better what we do, and has so far yielded very gratifying results.

Thanks to our students, alumnae, and faculty for their enthusiastic participation!

Warm Regards,

David Gitomer, Ph.D.
Director, MALS/IDS



A publication for students and alumni
of DePaul University's
MALS and IDS Programs

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The Joy of the Journey: Geographically, Intellectually, Spiritually just for starts...

Susan Jacobs, Associate Director

This past year, I have had the rare good fortune to make some incredible journeys—some, like the Vincentian Heritage Tour to France, were monumental and life altering. Others were smaller but equally enriching — my professional participation in the AGLSP Annual Conference in Philadelphia, a drive to a field in Jasper-Pulaski, Indiana to watch the late autumn migration of Sand Hill Cranes, or a visit to DePaul's Archive Collection, where we listened to Father Udovic talk about his life passion and glimpsed some of the treasures he's collected to illustrate St. Vincent's world through rare books, maps, and letters. In all these journeys great and small, I have felt incredibly lucky to have the opportunity to open my eyes, ears, and mind, and learn something new each time. And best of all, I am continually involved with our MALS and IDS students as they make their unique academic journeys through our programs.

The idea of a university as a community of scholars and learners becomes so much more when we, as participants, experience the full breadth of its meaning and potential; in other words, "the whole." So often in our lives as working adults, and I am no exception, we go through the motions to attain the end results: job security, advancement, benefits, shelter, sustenance, and yes, "the stuff" that marks our success in these daily activities.

It's good to be well-fed, comfortably housed, and sure that our families are safe and fulfilled. But our journeys are stressed by real questions:

How will we pay for this? How will we succeed? How will this effort translate into something meaningful and lasting?

But every once in a while, we get to glimpse a facet of the world that we haven't considered before; we get to taste a food that's foreign to us, try on a thought that doesn't quite fit the norm, or look up instead of down and see the first of 10,000 sandhill cranes glide in to feed in a corn field on a leg of a many-thousand mile yearly migration. We can walk the streets of Chatillon, France, look up and see that Saint Vincent walked these same cobble-stone lanes in 1617.



PHOTO BY SUSAN JACOBS

In all these journeys great and small, I have felt incredibly lucky to have the opportunity to open my eyes, ears, and mind, and learn something new each time.

One professional journey that I enjoy repeatedly is found in the very diverse and exciting work that our MALS and IDS students explore throughout the disciplines. Over the past year, many of our students completed their culminating projects, presented papers at conferences, and then graduated or are continuing with their studies. Nikki Zaleski completed her studies on "Participatory Theatre Methods in a Health Education Model"; Ryan O'Connor shared his findings on Ghanaian

Geo-spatial and –statistical Investigation of the Relationship between Poverty and Education in Chicago Using GIS and Census Data."

These are just a few of the glimpses of worlds in which I have little background, but in which our students become content experts as they explore incredibly specialized parts of "the whole." I value my role as expediter and

academic adviser as these explorations take flight.

This year, my journeys have reminded me of the myriad possibilities that our interdisciplinary programs invite, encourage, and enable our students and faculty to explore. As I think about the fine work that MALS and IDS students share with our academic community and throughout their professional spheres, I find that really very little of my almost 40 years as an educator can be characterized as routine— even paper grading, which I complain about regularly, gives me the unique chance to glimpse what our emerging thinkers and doers are, well, thinking and doing ... which may well lead to some of the finest journeys of all.



PHOTO BY SUSAN JACOBS

MALS and IDS Students and Faculty as Engaged Scholars DePaul Winter Conferences Highlight Departmental Talents

Susan Jacobs, Associate Director

During Winter Quarter 2015, MALS/IDS students and faculty actively engaged in two very rewarding events. Throughout the university, and especially in LAS, department and program directors have recognized our graduate students' eagerness to strengthen their involvement in academic community, build their presentation skills, and tap into DePaul's resources that encourage advanced intellectual conversations across the curriculum.

On Sat., Feb. 21, DePaul's Office of Adult, Veteran and Commuter Student Services hosted the Graduate Thesis and Dissertation Conference (see related interview with Director James Stewart, p. 5). This full day event provided workshops related to all stages of creating a dissertation or thesis subject through research, writing, and presenting.

MALS/IDS Director David Gitomer led a well-attended presentation on "Getting Started," an overview of the beginning stages of starting on a thesis or major project. He covered many aspects from choosing an advisor to topic selection and proposal writing, including an overview of developing a time line.

MALS/IDS Associate Director Susan Jacobs moderated the "First Person Panel" where current students at various stages of the thesis/dissertation journeys shared an informal talk about the challenges and rewards of their culminating projects. Panelists included Liz McConnell, 3rd year student in the Clinical-Community Psychology Ph.D. Program; Steffanie Triller Fry, SNL Instructor and MFA candidate at Lesley University; Melissa Riley Bradford, EdD Program; and Jaclyn Houston, Doctoral candidate in Community Psychology.

Additional sessions were presented by representatives from The Writing Center, Library, Office of Research, Compliance and Office of Research Services, Office of Health Promotion and Wellness, and other programs. Students enjoyed lunch and networking among topic-specific discussion tables. We hope to see more students from all disciplines attend this worthwhile event next year.

On Fri., Mar. 6, students attended "Crossing Boundaries: 2nd Annual LAS Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Conference." This exciting conference, a natural follow-up to the previous event, showcased works by graduate students across LAS' many departments and programs. The event began with a faculty panel discussing their engagement as scholars beyond the classroom. Dr. Noam Ostrander (MSW) moderated the talk which featured Barrie Jean Borish (ENG), Suzanne Carlberg-Racich

(MPH), Nancy Grossman (HON), and Ramya Ramanath (SPS). The day featured 31 LAS Graduate student paper presentations by, 10 poster presentations, and keynote presentation by Miles Harvey (ENG), best-selling national and international author. Ryan O'Connor (IDS) presented "Airing It All Out: Dirty Laundry, Intimacy, and Figures of Speech in the Popular Culture of Africa. Megan Metzger (IDS) presented "4-Eva Brenda: Fan Production Revision, Restoration and Redemption."

Creating and sharing interdisciplinary scholarship goes well beyond the classroom, as these opportunities to showcase student and faculty work illustrate. We at MALS/IDS are very proud of our students' participation in these and other events, and we will continue to let our students know about upcoming opportunities in our monthly e-newsletters, blog, and website.



PHOTO BY JOSH COVELL

Students, staff, and faculty mingle in the McGowan South building on March 6 at the second annual *Crossing Boundaries* Interdisciplinary Graduate Conference.

Spotlight on DePaul's Office of Adult Student Services

An interview with Assistant Director James Stewart

Kristina Pouliot, Student Assistant

James Stewart, Assistant Director of Adult, Veteran, and Commuter Student Services, loves his job. He works to support the adult student population at DePaul by offering programs, services, and various other resources.

Before coming to DePaul two years ago, Stewart worked at the University of Illinois at Chicago, working with commuter students. In his career, Stewart has “slowly gotten more and more away from [working with] the traditional student,” finding himself now working to “help the students who most want to be here and who are the most dedicated to getting something out of their education.”

“[Adult students] want to have out of class experience, they have extra challenges of time and multiple life roles. A lot of our adult students are working a job; they might be a parent, they may be a spouse or partner to someone. So [they want] a full college experience, yet might be pulled in four or five real directions.”

Stewart noted that all students in graduate programs are considered to be adult students, making DePaul’s total adult student population to be around 12,000. This is a surprisingly large figure, given DePaul’s private status. The Adult Undergraduate Student population is growing nationally, and part of Stewart’s job is to serve the various needs of all Adult Students here at DePaul.

Stewart also acts as the coordinator

for the Graduate Thesis and Dissertation Conference at DePaul. In its second year, this conference brings graduate students together to discuss the “huge process” of completing a thesis or dissertation.

The Thesis and Dissertation Conference comes at an exciting time for the MALS/IDS programs. More MALS/IDS Students than ever before are choosing a thesis or dissertation option over a 13-course practicum option. For students who choose a culminating project, there are conference workshops.

The Graduate Student Thesis and Dissertation Conference offers aid and guidance for students in all stages of writing and planning. Stewart revealed that the Winter conference date was chosen specifically for students who are just beginning their work, but the workshops will be applicable to students at all levels of completion. The final project is a critical part of graduate study, and the Graduate Thesis and Dissertation Conference offers networking, resources, and advice to students embarking on this academic quest.

James Stewart ended our conversation with a rich piece of advice for MALS/IDS Students. For students feeling isolated within their graduate studies, Stewart suggests looking outside the classroom.

“Look at engagement opportunities not just with [Adult Student Services] but with a variety of student affairs and outside the classroom offices. One unique opportunity [Adult Student Services] offers is a fund we have called our Personal Development



PHOTO COURTESY OF JAMES STEWART

Fund. It lets our student population either get membership paid or conference registration paid for something in their field. It’s a great opportunity for students to take their interests and that next step post-DePaul and think about how they can already get connected to that area.”

Stewart clearly loves his job and has a passion for engaging adult students in University life. “Odds are,” Stewart concluded, “students can find one way to get engaged inside or even outside DePaul. If we can help you in being connected and supported while at DePaul, then that’s great.”

**Adult, Veteran,
and Commuter
Student Services**

Adult Student Center: DePaul Center
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11th Floor, Room 11017
p: 312.362.6216

Website: <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/adultstudentservices/index.html>

First-Person Discoveries

Anne Walchak, IDS Student

I am very lucky to be in love with my profession. Teaching middle school, every day I was challenged. I created, problem-solved, cared, laughed, and was surprised and impressed by the people around me. I worked for 250 very important young people and was privileged to watch them grow. It is difficult to leave a job. It is nearly impossible to leave a job made up of people by whom you have been shaped. My undergraduate education had prepared me for the classroom, but my courses outside of the school of education were few, and their existence in my degree path felt rushed. I hoped to go back to graduate school to bolster my knowledge outside of the school of education.

Searching through graduate degree programs, DePaul's IDS Program allowed me to choose from a broad range of course options and combine the courses that interested me the most. My first course was over the summer and, while going from teacher to student was a big paradigm shift, it was exciting and challenging in a way I had not experienced in a long time. Still, I could not remove myself completely from the context of elementary education. Discussing certain literary works in my graduate classes, I found myself scribbling down ideas; comments from classmates or my professor would spark an idea as to how I could turn a text into a middle school-level lesson plan. By the time the course was finished, I had ten new lesson plans. I developed a new passion for elementary education as a context for other interests.

My advisor introduced me to DePaul's Digication. The Digication site began as a program requirement and evolved into a platform for my academic work to coexist alongside my new lesson plans. Small thoughts on younger students' capabilities analyzing complex texts grew into a mission statement on rigor in the classroom. Able to embed Youtube videos into Digication, I was motivated to create a space where students or teachers could access lesson plans I created through Prezi and Youtube.

An Arabic 101 class, taken for personal interest, and, at first glance, a misfit among my humanities courses, left a blank space on my Digication page. Through the reflection Digication prompted, I realized learning Arabic was the closest I had ever come to understanding how many of my students felt in school. I had spent most of my graduate study as a student, but as a thriving student. In Arabic, I was a struggling student. The feelings of frustration, empathy for my students, and admiration for the positivity and understanding of my instructor were another layer to my education I may not have experienced had I not been an IDS student.

IDS gave me the opportunity to develop organically as both a student and a teacher and the platform with which to reflect upon and organize my experiences. June of 2015, I will have a graduate degree that is a true symbol of my passions, personal interests, and professional practice having come together.



PHOTO BY SUSAN JACOBS

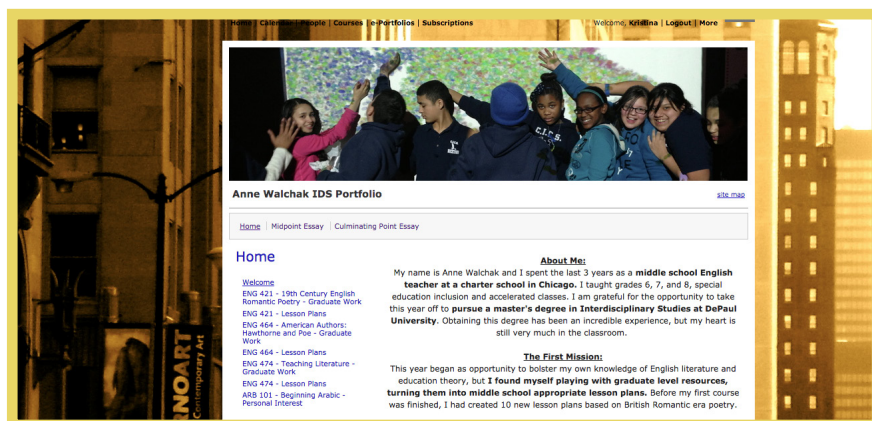
MALS/IDS Welcomes New Student Assistant

In August 2014, we welcomed Kristina Pouliot as our new student assistant. Kristina is a junior majoring in Sociology with minors in French and Marketing. She is originally from the Detroit area of Michigan, but grew up overseas in Europe.

Kristina's academic interests include consumer behavior, popular culture, sociology, and psychology. Kristina's regular work includes sending monthly emails, updating the MALS/IDS Blog (densejoyousmodern.com), and helping with MALS/IDS events. Her favorite aspect of this position is the interesting, ever-changing nature of our Interdisciplinary programs:

"My favorite thing about working at the MALS/IDS Office is that every day offers new tasks and challenges. I enjoy hearing about the exciting academic endeavors of our students; I am always amazed at the scholarly journeys on which our students embark."

Kristina is looking forward to the many adventures that are to come at MALS/IDS. If you ever have any scheduling, logistic, or general questions regarding our programs, you may contact her at 773-325-7840.



Anne Walchak's Digication Homepage

Reshaping MALS/IDS: Defining our Terms Continued from p. 1

What is the difference between “Interdisciplinarity,” “Interdisciplinary Studies,” and “Multidisciplinary Studies?”

We define “Interdisciplinarity” as the study of how various disciplines might inter-relate theoretically and pedagogically. “Interdisciplinary Studies” refers to the active process of engaging in multiple disciplines that lead to a unique set of conclusions, either anticipated or newly discovered. And “Multidisciplinary Studies” refers to a traditional “across the curriculum” study of a particular subject. For example, “Writing Across the Curriculum” might examine writing through various disciplines to understand

professions, writing in the liberal studies, etc.

How do these concepts define DePaul’s MALS/IDS Program?

The majority of MALS/IDS students now gravitate toward a more individualized Interdisciplinary Studies model; our students seek specific combinations of subject areas that enhance their current expertise or lead them to create new intellectual and work-related possibilities. Most importantly, we see growing valuation of Interdisciplinary Studies in the professions and in further post-graduate studies programs. Our students can often demonstrate to employers that customized studies add value to the workplace (ie. worthy of tuition reimbursement). Others use their

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how writing functions in specific contexts—like writing in the sciences, writing for the

MALS/IDS degree to earn admission to Ph.D. programs, more of which recognize Interdisciplinary Studies as a viable academic step towards advanced degrees. Our students often share their exciting discoveries in local, national, and international professional and academic conferences and publications.

We plan to bolster MALS/IDS by introducing a revamped introductory course, MALS/IDS 401, which will instruct our students in current interdisciplinary approaches of research, writing, and thesis development they will most likely encounter during their unique studies. As many programs throughout DePaul reach across the disciplines, more interdisciplinary activities have become available. Our students and

"I know that being someone who has a little exposure to a multitude of things, I can bring a **truly unique perspective that single-mindedness just doesn't allow for**. Further, it is an exercise in **opening my own mind**, to remain open to inspiration and possibilities (and impossibilities!)."

-Anna Kamelhair

faculty participate actively in the “Crossing Boundaries: Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Conference.”

They might attend a Humanities Center interdisciplinary improv comedy event, or a seminar in Liberal Arts and Sciences that includes discussion of environmentalism, public policy and the economics of green architecture, and so on.

By the time MALS/IDS students reach their culminating projects, whether they choose to complete a thesis/dissertation, a practicum, an exit course or extended portfolio, we expect them to feel the strength of new expertise, confidence in presenting their findings, and the true intellectual thrill of having constructed and completed advanced studies. And because their academic network extends throughout the university, they take ownership of exciting new possibilities.

...this is **not** the end
of my love
affair with learning.
Not by a long shot.

-Ros Lederman

"I was told once, it takes time to find a passion, so don't be stressed if you have yet to find yours. **Well, I'm on the path to figuring out what happens when you have too many passions.**"

-Dima Budron

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY



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<http://densejoyousmodern.com>

Online Resources

MALS/IDS Blog

www.densejoyousmodern.com

Via Sapientiae: The Institutional
Repository at DePaul University

via.library.depaul.edu

The Career Center

careercenter.depaul.edu

Financial Fitness

financialfitness.depaul.edu

University Center for Writing-based
Learning

condor.depaul.edu/writing

Adult Student Affairs

**[studentaffairs.depaul.edu/
adultstudentservices](http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/adultstudentservices)**

Financial Aid

**[depaul.edu/admission-and-aid/
financial-aid/pages/default.aspx](http://depaul.edu/admission-and-aid/financial-aid/pages/default.aspx)**

University Counseling Services

studentaffairs.depaul.edu/ucs

LAS Graduate Office

**[las.depaul.edu/people/
graduateoffice](http://las.depaul.edu/people/graduateoffice)**

Alumni Association

alumni.depaul.edu

Alumni Sharing Knowledge (ASK)

ask.depaul.edu

Study Abroad

studyabroad.depaul.edu

Student Legal Services

sls.depaul.edu

University Libraries

library.depaul.edu

Office for Academic Advising Support

oaas.depaul.edu

Productive Student uServices (PLuS)

studentaffairs.depaul.edu/plus

Course Catalog

sr.depaul.edu/coursecatalog

Campus Events

events.depaul.edu

Student Involvement

**[studentaffairs.depaul.edu/
involvement](http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/involvement)**