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# How to Launch an Interdisciplinary Leadership Program

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SPECIAL REPORT

## How to launch a doctoral interdisciplinary leadership program

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**Abstract.** Building a doctoral program in leadership is never an easy task, and building an interdisciplinary doctoral program is even more difficult. Yet, it is the interdisciplinary approach that differentiates typical leadership programs from others and offers learners an integrated view of leadership theories and practices. This special report presents an example of designing and implementing an interdisciplinary doctoral program that promotes social justice leadership. Drawing from firsthand experiences of program faculty, staff, and administration, we share lessons learned and the logic behind adopting an interdisciplinary approach for those creating programs that seeks to promote social justice. We found that by allowing students and faculty to convene together, rather than disperse into separate, isolated academic disciplines, emerging scholar-practitioners are encouraged to engage in realistic, professional practice investigation and problem-solving techniques. Through this experience, we also found that conscious coursework design involves integrating multiple, often quite divergent, disciplines into a core set of courses. Additionally, we learned that unifying students through a common mission permits distinctive discussions, including personal reflection and ethical decision-making opportunities among the concepts, constructs, and knowledge that extend beyond disciplinary lines (Cherney et al., 2012). We also found that cultivating a diverse student body and faculty base requires everyone to work strategically within the program, recognizing the call for coherence and consistency across disciplinary lines. Finally, we discovered that developing a dissertation in practice allows students to implement an evidence-based solution within their professional practice setting as their pinnacle doctorate work (Herr & Anderson, 2014; Olson & Clark, 2009). We conclude this paper by reiterating our finding that leadership programs that promote social justice are enhanced by adopting an interdisciplinary approach as this allows for the creation of a program that challenges students to learn at a more complex level, faculty to integrate disciplines, and programs to promote socially just ideals. We discuss implications for other schools seeking to develop an interdisciplinary doctoral leadership program.

**Keywords:** Interdisciplinary, leadership, social justice, dissertation in practice, doctoral

### Introduction

**A**cross the United States, institutions of higher education are seeing the need to create new leadership programs. While there are many doctoral programs that focus on leadership theories, strategic leadership, change leadership, organizational leadership, or servant leadership, few are designed specifically with an interdisciplinary, generalist, and mission-centric perspective in mind. The need to develop the next generation of ethical leaders in a particular field is one of many motivating factors for the creation of these new

program/degree offerings. The leadership program outlined here was also created with that outcome in mind, but unlike other leadership programs, it was designed to draw on the disciplinary expertise of faculty from across the various schools and colleges within the university and professional experts from a variety of fields, to appeal to a diverse array of adult learners from a variety of professions. In other words, the program was designed to appeal to mid-career professionals from any field who want to bring value-added leadership skills and knowledge to their current positions or aspire to new leadership opportunities, and who appreciate the flexibility of an online program. It was designed to be a practice-based generalist leadership program to allow students from diverse geographic backgrounds, with varied educational preparations, ethnicities, genders, ages, and professional experiences to solve global societal problems together.

The development of interdisciplinary programs has been fueled, in part, by the need for interdisciplinary perspectives useful to solving real-world problems. Leaders have to understand and approach leadership from an interdisciplinary perspective, whether it is in education where leaders need organizational and policy skills to promote transformative change in education; in the health professions where, increasingly, healthcare teams must communicate and collaborate in an efficient and effective manner; or in business where leaders must understand that organizations are learning organizations where leaders are designers, stewards, and teachers. Market analyses show that these diverse adults are seeking non-traditional careers with their advanced credentials. Although research and teaching remain the primary work activity of many doctoral-prepared individuals, these trends are also changing, particularly in the field of education. In 2006, 40% of doctoral recipients in education reported that “management or administration” would be their primary post-graduate work responsibility (Hoffer, Hess, Welch, & Williams, 2007). Nearly half of these graduates intended to work in industries other than academia (Hoffer et al., 2007).

Designing the Creighton University Interdisciplinary Leadership doctoral (Ed.D.) program presented several unique challenges and opportunities. The focus of this paper is to share insights from both the literature and a group of Creighton University educators who sought to create an innovative interdisciplinary doctoral program. Readers will learn not only some of the hurdles to be overcome when creating an interdisciplinary doctoral program, but also strategies to overcome these challenges. This paper will discuss tactics to create interdisciplinary coursework; how to acculturate both students and faculty to the mission, vision, and values of the program; how to align both students and faculty through the curriculum; and, finally, how to develop a dissertation that focuses on leadership practice. Drawing upon the limited but seminal literature available concerning interdisciplinary programs in higher education environments, we present challenges, strategies, and best practices for developing and implementing an interdisciplinary doctoral program in leadership.

Creighton University is a Catholic institution founded by the Jesuits in 1878 with undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs offered in nine schools and colleges. The University is dedicated to excellence and the pursuit of truth guided by the living tradition of the Catholic Church. As Jesuit, the tradition of the Society of Jesus serves as the integrating vision. Jesuit presence, tradition, and pedagogy are vital parts of the Creighton experience. Programs of study, course content, and teaching reflect the Jesuit philosophy tradition and inclusion of the charisms, or gifts of grace.

The mission of the Interdisciplinary Leadership Doctorate is grounded in Creighton University’s Jesuit ideals of academic excellence, respect for human dignity, and faith that does justice. In alignment with the University mission, the vision of the program is to prepare leaders who use their skills to promote social justice and who strive to leave the world a better place. Graduates, among other skills, are expected to demonstrate:

- Openness to integrative learning in a collaborative community of practice

- Moral courage and skills to innovate, adapt, and act in a changing world striving for a more just society
- Professional development through a process of continual self-reflection
- Understanding of organizational system challenges and opportunities in interdisciplinary work and practice

Jesuit tradition, pedagogy, and ideals provide the framework for the program of study, course design, and instructional model. The design and organization of the core courses and electives facilitates understanding of leadership theory, policy, research, and practice necessary to guide organizations in a global world. Consistent with Jesuit pedagogy, students engage in dialogue in interdisciplinary groups to gain understanding of how to interact with, develop, and motivate others. The diverse disciplinary backgrounds of discussants and course instructors expose students to new avenues of thinking and opposing viewpoints. The Jesuit tradition of critical self-reflection provides a framework in which students can explore newly formed ideas, models of leadership, decision-making, and an increased awareness of their personal leadership.

Unifying students through a common mission permits distinctive discussions beyond disciplinary lines. Solutions to global problems require leaders who are skilled in multiple disciplines, experienced in integrative thinking, and willing to unite efforts in a quest for solutions (Sternberg, 2008). In response to the growing need for leaders adept in interdisciplinary problem solving, Creighton University administrators initiated the Doctorate in Interdisciplinary Leadership in 2011. This innovative program sought to offer an online doctoral degree in leadership to students from diverse disciplines and careers. The unifying framework for this interdisciplinary model of leadership preparation is the mission of Creighton University and the tradition of the Jesuits. The vision of the program is preparation of leaders who will make the world a better place.

### **Program Design**

The newly formed Doctorate in Interdisciplinary Leadership serves about 300 students who work in fields of education, business, healthcare, non-profit, government, and law who reside in 44 states of the United States and 10 countries. The faculty members who teach are equally diverse in terms of academic preparation and disciplines. Online delivery makes it possible for working professionals to continue their education regardless of geographic location and time constraints. Program design enables students to gain an understanding of theory, research, and policy needed to provide ethical leadership, develop organizations, and collaborate with people in a changing, global society. Interdisciplinary courses foster the development of integrated thinking required to solve complex problems that do not fit within narrow boundaries of individual disciplines. Jesuit values provide a unifying philosophy that permeates all aspects of the program.

### **Student Orientation**

Students in the Doctorate in Interdisciplinary Leadership Program begin with an on-campus orientation. The Orientation, Leadership Seminar I, occurs on campus to provide an opportunity for relationship and community building among students and faculty. During this time, students meet members of their cohort and the faculty who will teach and advise them. They are introduced to the philosophy and mission of the University, the outcomes and expectations of the Interdisciplinary Leadership program, and the format of the online program and courses. Students use the results of the Gallup StrengthsFinder Inventory (Rath & Conchie, 2008) to explore the strengths they bring to leadership.

## **First Core Course**

The first core course in the program, Leadership Styles and Reflective Practice, is foundational in terms of knowledge, skill, and value development. Students gain knowledge of historical and contemporary leadership theories and develop skills in reflective practice, an essential tool in effective leadership. Each week students learn a new reflective skill that they use to better understand themselves and their leadership practices. Using course readings, students reflect on how their leadership practices match those within the leadership theories and consider how best to solve problems presented in weekly case studies. They share their ideas with peers and the instructor on the discussion board and write weekly reflections during which they compare their leadership practices to the theories in course readings. The discussion board provides a rich laboratory in which to share ideas, solutions, and problems with peers from diverse academic disciplines. Students learn to appreciate the perspectives and experiences of others and understand the value of considering problems through alternative lenses. Through the circular process of feedback, critical self-reflection, and discernment, students increase self-awareness and form an integrated theory of personal leadership fundamental to leadership formation in the Jesuit tradition. Students throughout their doctoral courses use the practice of mindful reflective thinking adopted during the course.

## **Cultivating an Interdisciplinary Student Body and Faculty**

Cultivating an interdisciplinary student body and faculty base requires everyone to work strategically, recognizing the need for program coherence and pedagogical consistency across disciplinary lines. The Doctorate in Interdisciplinary Leadership incorporates Ignatian values that promote respect, humility, and ethics in leadership. Once in the program, courses utilize these values to provide students with a transformative exposure to these principles. Faculty members are expected to demonstrate these values as they teach and interact with students.

However, while potential students are attracted to the notion of an Ignatian, values-based doctoral program in leadership, they often do not understand what these values truly mean. Thus, faculty and administrators confront the difficulty of trying to attract and build interdisciplinary cohorts of individual students from varied backgrounds (business, healthcare, education, public, and non-profit sectors) that nonetheless all have the potential to become leaders who are capable of becoming agents of change for social justice. Additionally, program administration seeks avenues to recruit and socialize core professors and professors-of-practice who embrace the Ignatian values inherent in the program and who can step away from rote disciplinary dogma and towards a more inclusive approach.

The first step involves the application process. Prospective students are required to submit materials common to doctoral programs, including transcripts, letters of recommendation, writing samples, and a purpose statement. Much attention is given to applicants who have a unique story and who show promise in terms of working within a multidisciplinary team. Their motivation to be part of an interdisciplinary program is key to their success in the program. In an application review, program faculty seek applicants who express a desire to use their talents to help others. It is also important to seek out prospective students who possess diverse backgrounds. The aim is to admit a balanced mix where each applicant can contribute to the larger mission of the University. This goal is not always easy to attain, as admittance happens throughout the year. Because the members of the admissions committee are also from various disciplines, they can help the committee discern who the most qualified candidates may be. There is a high value to writing and research skills – applicants who struggle with their writing proficiency may be accepted conditionally after successfully completing a writing course.

Once admitted, students are organized into interdisciplinary cohorts and proceed through a set of core classes, research courses, a practicum, and electives. The program director

strategically sets up each cohort, making sure that each group is as varied as possible in terms of leadership background, geographic location, career sector, gender, ethnicity, and age.

A doctoral program needs experienced and varied faculty members to maintain a consistent teaching and mentoring approach. Core faculty mirror the varied composition of students and represent business, law, nursing, political science, education, and psychology. An oft-utilized and trained group of talented professors-of-practice with doctoral degrees in communication, education, finance, law, administration, policy, diverse health care sciences, marketing, and various social sciences help provide the learning experiences for students throughout the program. All faculty members are expected to be familiar with proponents of the Ignatian values inherent in the program as well as be experienced and talented scholars. They are all required to complete an online orientation that includes an introduction to the Jesuit mission and Ignatian values as well as how to best engage adult learners. In addition, faculty have prepared an online training site for all professors-of-practice that introduces them to the policies, mission, and culture of the program, APA style guidelines, and other important program elements, such as best practices for teaching in the interdisciplinary environment.

### **Lessons Learned for Optimal Program Functioning**

Implementation of the Doctorate in Interdisciplinary Leadership provides many opportunities for reflection and revision of processes and practices. While student learning is the priority of the program, so too is maximizing limited resources and optimizing faculty talents. Development and implementation of the program has shown the need for consistent and frequent communication among program faculty and students and development of resources to assist students at various stages of development throughout the program.

#### ***Communication***

Of course, communication between program directors, core faculty, and professors-of-practice is critical. As one might suspect, there is no one-size-fits-all approach. A variety of strategies promote effective communications. First, faculty hold weekly program meetings to discuss tactical issues. Second, faculty and administration hold biannual planning retreats to discuss larger strategic plans. Third, the faculty hold meetings twice a year to introduce all faculty members to the latest thoughts, plans, and issues confronting the program. Utilization of weekly and monthly newsletters are sent as written communication to all faculty. Finally, the use of a course director system to coordinate and match core faculty members with professors-of-practice who teach courses creates a partnership of sorts between a core faculty member and a course instructor. Each course director is a core faculty member who has control over the master course structure in the learning management software. Thus, the core faculty member serving in the course director role manages any changes to the course itself. Before and after each term, the course director converses with the faculty teaching the course and gauges all course content adjustments that need to be implemented.

#### ***The Student Experience***

The student experience depends on the coordination of the curriculum and teaching assignments that align with the composition of the student body – as mentioned prior, who are all adult learners. Most of the students are accomplished professionals or experts in their respective fields. The biggest curricular challenge for students entering the program is writing. The program has attempted to meet students where they are and provide assistance in order to promote writing. As such, writing strategies and approaches have been explored and implemented. Some of the strategies implemented by the program have been:

- Creation of a writing course for conditionally admitted applicants and struggling students

- Design of templates for research papers, the proposal, and the dissertation itself
- Reinforced research and writing components of courses early in the program
- Emphasis on regular and substantive feedback from faculty to students
- Engagement with the University resources such as Creighton's Online Writing Center, and the program's Dissertation Consultant
- Regular student surveys designed to understand student-identified writing needs

The strategies shared in this section were designed and are delivered by reaching out to faculty and students through regular institutionalized channels. These communication efforts help make standards known and accessible for faculty members and students alike. By continuing to develop communication efforts with both groups, there is hope to continue to grow and enhance what has been a success story in online graduate education.

### **Developing a “Dissertation in Practice”**

In 2007, the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) (2015), a consortium of over 25 colleges and schools of education (now more than 80), came together to collaborate on a common vision of the Ed.D. degree. The aim was to articulate the nature and function of the doctorate of education and provide a framework for continuous program improvement. Under the leadership of then President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Dr. Lee Shulman, and the backing of the Council for Academic Deans of Research Education Institutions (CADREI), the project said, “The professional doctorate in education prepares educators for the application of appropriate and specific practices, the generation of new knowledge, and for the stewardship of the profession” (CPED, 2015). The consortium started to refer to that type of dissertation as a *dissertation in practice*, a term that the current program is using in the broader context of leadership. Developing a dissertation in practice as a contribution to the greater good of the professional practice setting differentiates the Doctoral Program in Leadership from other doctoral leadership programs. Typically, the dissertation serves as the pinnacle of a doctoral student's academic career. In recognizing the applied nature of searching and discovering social justice components in curriculum development, student recruitment, reflective coursework, and Ignatian values, designing a unique and appropriate dissertation to meet these goals and values proved no less provocative or engaging. Herr and Anderson (2005) commented on the difficulty of refining the traditional dissertation into a more applied and action-based one, stating, “Action research is inherently interdisciplinary and seldom fits neatly into the norms of a particular field of discipline” (p. 2). As such, creating a dissertation model for an interdisciplinary program of study was, indeed, messy work.

### **The Term “Dissertation in Practice” Has Been Coined by the Carnegie Foundation**

The dissertation, as a freestanding piece of writing, should be embedded in the values and teachings of the program from which it emerges. Shulman (2005) articulated signature pedagogy as “requiring students to think, to perform, and to act with integrity” in preparation for professional work (p. 52). The dissertation, then, is no different in that it is a piece of work meant to contribute to the professional practice setting. After reading several initial student dissertations and working through development, drafting, and defending, the leaders of this program were compelled, through reflection and soul-searching, to move beyond a traditional dissertation into a dissertation model embedded in core values and principles of the institution. It was imperative that such a shift protect academic content and professional rigor. The overwhelming consensus was that after the type of interdisciplinary, values-based coursework students engage in for two successive years, as doctoral candidates they were prepared to go into the professional practice setting to exercise their leadership capacity in attempting to solve a problem.

After several stages of revision and refinement over the initial three-year program implementation, doctoral faculty convened to determine the design and function of a dissertation in an interdisciplinary program rooted with values in social justice and Ignatian pedagogy. Students, throughout their coursework, are encouraged to apply knowledge to their workplaces and professional practice settings. The natural design of a dissertation follows in the systematic process of inquiry. Students are asked to apply knowledge and theory in proposing changes or problem solving within their professional practice setting (Olson & Clark, 2009). Such a design requires students to identify more than just a work problem, but a complex and significant problem, something that is overreaching and long-term. It also requires students to produce original research incorporating basic qualitative and quantitative research structures. Students enter their professional practice setting having identified a problem and seeking a way to gather information, or data, about the problem in order to seek a proposed remedy. Students are not allowed to guess or assume based on professional experience, but are sent into their professional practice settings as researchers seeking to discover new and novel information that can then benefit the organization in return.

The core faculty, after reflecting upon the program's values and core teaching processes, designed an original dissertation in practice format for the interdisciplinary doctoral program. The model, called a "dissertation in practice," drew roots from work done by the CPED and includes action or applied research, within the scholar-practitioner model. The definition promulgated by the CPED (2015) for the dissertation in practice states, "The Dissertation in Practice is a scholarly endeavor that impacts a complex problem of practice." Designing a dissertation based in practice permits students the latitude to utilize skills, practices, and values formed throughout the core program coursework while also incorporating a strong academic base. In addition, the interdisciplinary dissertation in practice at this Jesuit institution includes a conscious reflective piece mirroring the values of the institution's pedagogical founder.

The purpose of this program's interdisciplinary dissertation was adopted with this language: "To investigate and design an evidence-based solution in incorporating leadership theories, reflective practices, and an interdisciplinary focus to address a complex real-world problem based within a student's professional practice setting."

Within this goal statement are three key pieces characteristic of the interdisciplinary program: reflection on values and social justice principles, interdisciplinary studies, and leadership theory. Students are asked to begin with the initial coursework, from the first days in the initial class to the final days in online classroom preparing for this penultimate exercise.

One of the main features of the dissertation in practice is the necessity of an "aim." The aim is unique from the purpose in that while the purpose tells why a study is important, the aim is the resulting piece of turning the "why" into action. The aim is essentially a product produced as a result of the dissertation study. In a traditional dissertation, readers are often left with a "so what?" feeling – that is, conclusions are drawn, recommendations are made, but no concrete application pieces are developed for the reader to implement or act upon. In an interdisciplinary program filled with practicing teachers, business managers, medical personnel, and military leaders, the students are already applying their learning to their everyday lives. Following suit with the dissertation is a natural progression that seemingly makes sense to most of the students. The aim of the dissertation in practice should cause a student to design, develop, facilitate, or simply do something of value, meaning, and contribution to the greater good, which contributes to the professional-practice setting. Students are no longer left with recommendations, but with a proposed solution, implementation plan, and assessment piece to take into their professional practice setting and begin making changes for the greater good.

As the pieces of the dissertation in practice were implemented, faculty noted an invigorated investment from the student body in that the outcome is now mirroring the practice of scholarship they are experiencing in coursework. Initial dissertation in practice submissions enabled one student to focus his dissertation work on fundraising for a youth

camp, while another planned to create a preschool education program in her school district, and another proposed a framework to help his organization reduce the frequency of assaults on community members. Others started seeking opportunities in local organizations, not just workplaces, where they could contribute an evidence-based solution to a problem – from churches to social venues to nursing homes. Student reflections began to echo refrains of transformations as a student, employee, and person. Faculty oversight is less invasive, serving more as a facilitator rather than director of the study. Overall, the interdisciplinary students embrace the change, and many report finding new life and energy, rather than exhaustion and defeat, as they entered their dissertation stage.

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

Creating interdisciplinary coursework that promotes social justice in a higher education environment has numerous challenges but also creates vast opportunities to develop students into learners who can think at deeper, more complex levels (Manathunga, Lant, & Mellick, 2006). Strategically developing programs, courses, assignments, and assessment tools provides the best opportunity for interdisciplinary programs to thrive. By purposefully recruiting and mentoring faculty so they are equipped to work in an interdisciplinary fashion and learning from others who have adopted such an approach, an institution can incorporate an interdisciplinary mindset that is likely to be successful. Following is a discussion of frequent challenges faced when creating interdisciplinary programs and courses as well as approaches that have been demonstrated to address these challenges.

Literature demonstrates that developing interdisciplinary programs and courses in higher education environments requires thought and planning (Manathunga et al., 2006; Shibley, 2010). First, assembling faculty with differing scholarly perspectives is not easy. Educators and researchers who have invested years of their lives developing deep knowledge in a discipline often find it very difficult to understand the theoretical paradigms of others. For example, imagine drawing together faculty from diverse fields such as medicine and leadership, law and education, political science and psychology. Creating cross-functional development teams can result in confusion about not only course content but also teaching methods, approaches to mentoring and advising students, and grading strategies.

Second, once interdisciplinary development teams are assembled, the next task is to create courses that are truly interdisciplinary, while achieving content depth and breadth. Faculty must negotiate not only how much time to allocate on each topical area, but also how to balance their philosophies, assignments, and readings. Often, courses are written with an inherent imbalance, leaving students feeling they are really receiving two separate courses rather than one, synthesized learning experience.

Third, creating interdisciplinary programs and courses requires faculty to collaborate across departmental lines, requiring increased time commitments and battling logistical constraints. Educators become accustomed to “how we do it in our department,” resulting in confusion about how to get the job done. It is not that faculty members intend to be difficult; rather, most develop habits that allow them to be efficient in their work. These habits, even heuristics, provide clarity when faced with numerous, competing work assignments. Bringing together faculty members who have developed differing work styles can slow down the course-creation process, thus creating frustration and angst. Additionally, political views and differing subcultures across campus or universities can taint potential working relationships, thus making interdisciplinary programs and courses very difficult to bring to fruition.

Given the challenges listed above, one wonders why educators would tackle such a complex goal – that of creating interdisciplinary programs that promote social justice in higher education. The reason becomes clear in that social justice, the central theme about which the interdisciplinary curriculum, methods, and language coalesce, is a worthwhile goal. Social justice leadership emanates and can be applied to multiple disciplines. Students who come from business, healthcare, non-profit, military, education, and legal professions benefit

from drawing on diverse departmental mindsets, as well as applying social justice leadership concepts in their own workplace setting. The extra effort required to create an interdisciplinary program is worthwhile as learners are challenged to think more critically about social justice leadership topics and their application.

Although crossing disciplinary lines is difficult, doing so allows for enhanced learning opportunities as each content area can inform others. Social justice leadership is required in every sector and in most fields; thus, by interlinking thought leaders, we can learn at much deeper levels. Students are able to obtain a broader sense of the world and the multiple views therein, helping them to develop flexible thinking skills essential for today's complex global problems.

### **Suggestions for Creating an Interdisciplinary Program/Course**

In order to create interdisciplinary coursework at the doctoral level, Manathunga et al. (2006) suggested four dimensions that should be considered including coursework that 1) is "relational, mediated, and transformative," 2) is driven by and incorporated with intercultural sensitivity, 3) encourages students' meta-cognitive abilities, and 4) assists students in understanding their own epistemological views as well as the views of others (p. 368). They went on to suggest that, in order to operationalize these four key dimensions, it is important to build into courses assignments and discussions that encourage dialogue, using learning resources drawn from multiple disciplines, assisting and mentoring students in synthesizing diverse bodies of knowledge, and incorporating teaching methods that bring diverse contexts to light.

Spelt, Biemans, Tobi, Luning, and Mulder (2009) conducted a review concerning interdisciplinary thinking; they defined interdisciplinary thinking as "the capacity to integrate knowledge of two or more disciplines to produce a cognitive advancement in ways that would have been impossible or unlikely through single disciplinary means" (p. 365). This work lends some understanding to how interdisciplinary thinking in higher education environments can be developed, but as the authors stated, research in the area is extremely limited.

When creating interdisciplinary programs, it is essential to allow ample time for program development. Developing theory and evidence-driven program outcomes and mapping these outcomes to specific courses can assist with program development. Once the program outcomes are decided, it is essential to purposefully recruit faculty members across disciplines who collectively can develop and deliver courses. Not all faculty members have the time or tenacity to work across disciplinary lines. Thus, knowing who not to recruit can be as important as knowing who to recruit as the cost of a bad fit can have significant downstream implications.

Once faculty members are on board, program leaders need to instill a collective vision of what the program is attempting to achieve. This message needs to be shared continuously and through all outlets – including marketing materials, course syllabi, and all communications. Once the program and courses are developed and have been running for a semester or two, it is also important to reassess – did the program accomplish what we intended to accomplish? Are courses attending to the appropriate disciplines, as designed, in a balanced and integrated way? Do rubrics capture the most important elements of our learning outcomes? Is there adherence to a program map? Is there a specific focus of social justice throughout the program? How can this be assessed?

This paper sought to share experiences of those charged with the responsibility to create Creighton University's Doctoral Program in Leadership. This program adopted an interdisciplinary approach to help students learn and apply topics focused upon social justice leadership. This design and the implementation of an interdisciplinary doctorate program focused upon social justice leadership created rare opportunities to share expertise, collaborate across disciplines, and foster unique connections throughout curriculum and work products. Building a program on a foundation of Jesuit values allows students to explore not

only course content, but also collaboration and reflection as integral practices of learning. The dissertation in practice, then, is the final summative piece wherein students demonstrate core course content, practices, and knowledge in a scholarly, applied fashion. The program itself must also incorporate the same practices when refining content, assessment piece, and student outcomes, thus ensuring the values are integrated into the foundation of the program.

Practically speaking, creating an interdisciplinary program is not the quickest process – developing an interdisciplinary curriculum, recruiting and acculturating a diverse faculty and student body, tailoring assessment to meet the interdisciplinary approach, and aligning with the social justice mission all take time and thought. Yet, the advantages of this extra time and energy are worth the effort when considering the types of global challenges leaders face today in all sectors. Those seeking to adopt a program as outlined above should consider the extra time and effort it will require.

If a university does choose to follow the interdisciplinary program path, careful recruitment of program administration and faculty is essential. Program directors will not have the luxury of working within a single department. Rather, they will be required to seek out faculty from across disciplinary lines who they feel can adapt to the interdisciplinary approach. The cost of recruiting an ill-fit faculty member is high as they can slow down all of the processes, if not stop the process altogether. It is true that these types of programs take more time to create, and this should be expected, but recruiting faculty who resist the notion and value of an interdisciplinary approach should be avoided.

Program marketing and student recruitment also must be done with great care. The goals and objectives of the program will need to be explained continuously as students progress through coursework. It is not uncommon for students to misunderstand their peers' viewpoints. Of course, this is a major benefit of the program as students are exposed to leaders from other sectors, all interested in social justice leadership, but viewing it differently within their own context. Faculty can ease this confusion and discomfort, drawing out the lessons learned in the process.

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