

**Report of the Academic Program Review Team
Interdisciplinary Film and Digital Media Program**

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Review Team

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1. Program Goals

According to the website and echoed in the self-study, the Interdisciplinary Film and Digital Media Program (IFDM) at the University of New Mexico has four objectives:

- Integrate Filmmaking and Digital Media
- Build a Native New Mexican Hollywood
- Train the Citizens of New Mexico
- Foster Research

Unfortunately, the mission, goals/educational objectives, as published, appear to be a relic of a bygone era when there was more money and interdepartmental support available. Indeed, as stated on the UNM website, the IFDM program was established in 2005 under New Mexico's Media Industries Strategy Plan (MISP), an initiative that no longer has the support of the current Governor's administration and no longer exists, as far as a Google search goes. It is the recommendation of the review team that the mission, goals/educational objectives be re-evaluated and re-envisioned to reflect the realities of current resources and the capacity to deliver on the promise of the interdisciplinary concept. As for the educational objectives, as outlined in the self-study, there are ten student learning outcomes, and the expectation of the Higher Learning Commission will be that each of these outcomes will need to be assessed at some point to determine if the IFDM program is successfully delivering these outcomes.

The Review Team recommends that the IFDM program streamlines its student learning outcomes to a more manageable five, especially since some of them tend to be vague or repetitive. Otherwise, the more learning outcomes that are promised, the more the program is accountable for providing evidence of success in delivering said outcomes. The Review Team also recommends that the program determines whether its philosophy is more vocational or more academic and

research-based. If it's to be both, then be more specific in the types of vocational training and research.

The goals, as published, seem to be consistent with UNM's and the unit's, but, as stated above, need to be re-defined based on lessons learned in the past decade. For instance, the chances of building a "Native New Mexican Hollywood" seemed to be promising in 2005, but, given the current economic climate, are slim if there's no financial infrastructure to support it. If the program wishes to retain this particular objective, then a set of criteria must be established to measure how this target, as described, will be achieved through IFDM.

Student awareness of program goals varies, as expected, depending on who you ask. Somewhat unexpected and more concerning was the fact the Deans of the participating schools weren't aware, some indicating that the goals are too scattered or not clearly defined. While some students agreed with this sentiment, others were very aware of IFDM's goals and have whole-heartedly bought into its holistic philosophy. Some even wear it as a badge of honor. According to one student, some think of IFDM as more of a fraternity than a degree program. Although that's nice for morale, it's not an indicator of the published program goals.

As stated above, the Review Team recommends that the IFDM program reconsider and revise its goals and learning outcomes so that they are more concise, manageable, and measurable so as to be more easily communicated in a consistent fashion to students, faculty and Deans alike.

2. Teaching and Learning: Curriculum

The review team felt that the criteria for adequate coverage of program-appropriate curricular components was not met. The majority of both the students and the total degrees being awarded are coming from one college, the College of Fine Arts. During our informal meetings the deans and representatives from the other Colleges did not express adequate knowledge of or show adequate support for the program to make it truly interdisciplinary.

A prime example of Fine Arts being more committed to the IFDM than the other colleges is the actual description of the degrees each college offers. The College of Fine Arts is the only school to offer an actual Bachelor's degree in IFDM. In some cases the other colleges weren't even sure if they offered a minor or a concentration in IFDM. Furthermore, even in the self-study we received prior to the review, the numbers of students enrolled in IFDM weren't even reported by some of the other colleges.

We felt strongly that for the program to be truly interdisciplinary, ALL of the various disciplines need to be invested in the program (and the level of investment should be similar across the board).

Unfortunately that current lack of support from the Colleges is reflected in IFDM students not being able to enroll in required courses.

On the other hand, the IFDM does contribute to and adequately communicate with other units. Non-IFDM students seem very aware of and definitely benefit from

courses offered by IFDM. For example, the two students present in an ArtsLab class that we visited expressed their enthusiasm for the work they were doing and the classes benefits to their education, even though they weren't enrolled in the IFDM program.

Not much time was spent visiting extracurricular activities, but as evidenced by the popularity of the end of the semester showcase and the camaraderie between IFDM students, the extracurricular component seems impressive.

The program delivery modes are of sufficient quality and do address the student needs, but we had some concerns about the unavailability of certain required classes for the IFDM students. The modes in place are good and the faculty for the classes that are being offered seem to be doing an excellent job, but again the lack of participation (in the form of faculty and classes devoted primarily to IFDM students) from some of the Colleges involved means that some beneficial (and sometimes required) courses are only marginally available to IFDM students.

3. Teaching and Learning, Continuous Improvement

The Review Team did not see evidence of regular use of appropriate documented processes for assessing and evaluating the extent to which the program educational objectives are being attained, with the exception of anecdotal evidence from instructors who utilize their own rubrics to measure student learning outcomes. The unit's own self-study, in fact, concedes that the Fall 2015 semester will be the first where student work will be evaluated via "a formal qualitative evaluation," though it doesn't provide any specifics or methodology for this evaluation.

According to both the students and instructors interviewed by the Review Team, there is regular use of appropriate evaluation tools for assessing teaching effectiveness manifest in teaching evaluation forms provided to the students, and the instructors interviewed said they allocated class time for students to fill out evaluation forms. There were no sample evaluation forms or data included in the self-study, but the apparent satisfaction of the students interviewed indicates that the results would be positive.

Results of evaluations systematically utilized as input for the continuous improvement of programs is mostly anecdotal since, again, there was no evidence provided in the self-study. And although feedback from the instructors and students seemed positive, the Review Team notes with some concern on this topic that a fully functional academic program is not sustainable from an assessment standpoint if there is no full-time faculty accountable for delivering the learning outcomes in a consistent fashion and implementing initiatives for continuous improvement based on evaluations. Although the adjunct instructors interviewed seemed very committed, they cannot be held to the same standards of accountability as a full-time faculty member.

4. Students

Speaking to the students was the highlight of our review. All of the students we met with showed both professional promise and a true appreciation for the

program that helped them develop their skills. The quality of students that the program is creating speaks volumes about the benefits of the IFDM program. We were particularly impressed by the students' holistic approach to media and their ability to be self-reflexive about this approach.

The performance of the students has clearly been well monitored, but we did have some concern about the sustainability and consistency of this monitoring. With only a rotating adjunct faculty (and no permanent tenure track hires) to establish and enact the criteria by which the students will be monitored and evaluated there is a real risk that the quality of this monitoring could change.

Advising of students was another concern we had. We should mention here that this was a concern that the IFDM has already started to address by replacing the previous (and as far as we were told, inadequate) advisor. The lack of effective/accessible advising was also the number one complaint from the students we spoke with (including the students who were extremely satisfied with their experiences in IFDM). The program has been able to provide advising and the proper courses for the students, but it's been through a process of workarounds. The student's satisfaction with advisement from other departments was also mixed at best. A single well-informed and effective advisor rather than several spread out through different departments would alleviate much of the student confusion (and frustration).

During our meeting with the Provost's office, we saw data that showed retention in IFDM is very high. This is a positive indicator for the program and a good tool for self-evaluation. Our only concern was that this wasn't reflected in the self-study. It could be a powerful tool for increasing support for the program in the future and we'd like to see IFDM using it. During the group meeting in which we presented our initial review some progress was made toward this goal.

Tracking and assessing the success of graduates is hard for any program at any University. There are not many comprehensive programs implemented to do this and therefore the success of students is only tracked through the self-reporting of a few students. That having been said, IFDM is doing as well or better than comparable programs at this. They seem to actually have great job placement (based on the self-study and anecdotally). Students feel camaraderie with the faculty and seem relatively diligent and excited to self-report their post college success.

5. Faculty

The IFDM faculty is highly qualified and there are certainly enough faculty members to allow the program to function. Several professionals are working within the program, bringing admirable levels of expertise. Most faculty are adjuncts, though some are professors. Because the program has no full-time faculty lines, there is a problem with consistency. Course content tends to change on a regular basis. Several students expressed concern regarding the unpredictable nature of the curriculum.

Faculty's creative and research activities are noteworthy. Many are creating artworks in the commercial sphere, or in the academic realm. The research and creativity taking place at ArtsLab is especially compelling.

Interaction between students and faculty is fruitful. Miguel Gandert is an outstanding mentor, a fatherly presence, and a figure that many students greatly admire. However, several students were deeply dissatisfied with advisement. With so many academic tracks within IFDM, and many students forced to utilize petitions of substitution to gain the necessary credit hours, it has proven difficult for advisers to keep abreast of the latest criteria for graduation. Advisement would be more efficient if delivered by full-time, tenure-track faculty.

University service is engaged in by those faculty who are full-time. However, since most IFDM faculty are adjunct, university service is, in most cases, not required of them. This can mean that faculty feel somewhat removed from the institution they serve, and unable to fully take part in university decision making.

Levels of professional development are admirable. Since many faculty members are professionals in their field (e.g., Michael Kamins of KNME television, and C.K. Barlow of the music department), there is great productivity in this area.

6. Resources and Planning

Resource planning and allocation is meticulous at IFDM by necessity. Miguel is constantly forging new ways to utilize funds and space in the most efficient ways, e.g. he has worked with campus experts to make the Mesa del Sol facility an energy neutral space and, as a result, could save the program \$55,000 a year.

While the unit has I & G funding, the Mesa del Sol endowment, and some assistance from grants, there are large financial challenges ahead. For example, there is an imminent need to replace outdated computers.

There appear to be sufficient staff members to efficiently administer the program. They are enthusiastic and display high morale. The review team was particularly impressed by Miguel's efforts to create an ethnically diverse staff.

External support for IFDM is not what it once was. At present, most support is from the College of Fine Arts. In conference with Deans of other IFDM Colleges, the review team discovered that enthusiasm for collaboration has waned.

7. Facilities

Facilities, especially the Mesa de Sol complex, are impressively equipped and provide adequate space for scholarly activities. Most faculty do not retain an office at IFDM facilities because most are adjuncts or members of other Colleges. Library services are appropriate and accessible throughout the university. Computer and

information infrastructure are serving students efficiently at this time. Computer labs are well stocked, but there is ongoing concern about the feasibility of replacing outdated equipment. At the Mesa del Sol facility, the black box studio and the theater are impressively equipped and provide students with an inspiring and multi-faceted workspace.

8. Program Comparisons

Institutional support and leadership is a concern of the committee. Miguel seems to be doing a fantastic job as the leader of the program, and he has a clear vision of both the student goals and the faculty needs. However, none of this is institutionally established, so we have concerns about the viability of the program when Miguel eventually steps down.

A similar cross-disciplinary program at the University of Texas, between the film program and computer science, relies on a tenure-track faculty member and a documented curriculum that continues from one administration to the next.

Institutional services and financial and staff support do seem to be currently adequate. The institution is covering the needs at present, and the Provost's office indicates that there are funds for the program's future. If, however, interest continues to wane among the participating Colleges, then we have concerns about the longevity of that financial support.

The exciting nature of the program is sufficient to attract well-qualified adjunct faculty; however, the lack of any tenure-track lines makes it impossible to attract and retain permanent faculty. The long-term participation of permanent faculty from other departments is also in question. The recent loss of two highly motivated computer science professors, who had expressed great enthusiasm for IFDM, created a hole in the IFDM curriculum. The IFDM will continually be susceptible to faculty eventually departing unless it can have devoted tenure track faculty.

Compared to peer institutions, the facilities and equipment is on par with first tier institutions. The Mesa del Sol facility is particularly impressive. Its proximity to Albuquerque Studios is both inspiring and potentially productive (in terms of exposing students to internship and entry level opportunities). This criteria was clearly met.

Job placement and student satisfaction is also on par with first tier institutions. As we already mentioned, the students were the highlight of the visit. We were impressed by the self-reflective and holistic attitude of the upperclassmen we talked to. The ethnic and economic diversity of the student body is as good or better than any peer institution. Much credit goes to Miguel for this.

9. Future Direction

According to the self-study, IFDM holds a faculty retreat each year to discuss the direction of the program, though the self-study did not include a report or mention any outcomes of said retreat over the years of the program's existence. The Review Team recommends that a report is generated from each annual retreat, noting the attendees, the issues addressed and the recommended actions. That way, at each

subsequent retreat, it can be assessed if actions were taken to adequately address the issues of concern.

There is no documented evidence that the unit makes use of appropriate data, including peer comparisons, in strategic planning. However, according to the self-study and anecdotal evidence, the program is being assertive in strategic planning. Apparently attuned to the fact that some other partnering schools aren't actively engaged as they once were, the IFDM program is seeking more engaged partners, such as music and dance, and the Review Team interviewed representatives from said programs who were very supportive about a future partnership.

Overall, the unit is very aware of its strengths and weaknesses, and is seeking to address the areas of concern. The implementation of an Academic Program Review team is evidence of a prioritization of improvement activities. The Review Team hopes that the IFDM program will consider and act on the Review Team's recommendations, particularly in the areas of hiring more full-time faculty, streamlining student learning outcomes and articulating a methodology to measure whether or not student learning outcomes and program goals have been achieved. The scrutiny of the Higher Learning Commission is a bit more rigorous than a three day visit from an Academic Review Team and, especially after accreditation is granted, requires a lot more documented evidence of assessment than what was supplied.

In closing, in spite of the lack of assessment protocol, the Review Team was impressed by the IDFM program, its students, instructors and facilities, and feels that there can be a bright future.