

Responses to ‘Disciplinary Hegemony’

Stuart Henry’s essay in the 2005 volume of *Issues in Integrative Studies* (pp. 1-37), a revision and expansion of a presentation given at the 2005 national AIS conference, examined trends in the fortunes of interdisciplinary programs. In this volume, we continue the analysis with the inclusion of commentary by three respondents who shared that podium: Rick Szostak, Tanya Augsborg, and Paul Burkhardt.

Henry argued that while interdisciplinarity in its various manifestations is gaining acceptance and has accounted for the development of new knowledge, long-standing interdisciplinary studies programs are coming under scrutiny and, in some universities, being devalued or dropped. He examined the power of disciplinary departments in the context of current economic conditions in higher education, especially in public institutions, and he suggested strategies for interdisciplinary schools, departments, or programs to address threats to their existence and to build a foundation for their continued influence.

Szostak proposes that one way to position interdisciplinary studies programs administratively is through a shared understanding of the interdisciplinary venture that allows for a rich variety of programs while emphasizing how they build upon and complement the disciplines. He also suggests organizational strategies such as flexible academic appointments that invite investment from disciplinary departments. These strategies may help to position new interdisciplinary programs and to secure those that find themselves at risk.

Augsborg, on the other hand, highlights the centrality of faculty hires for the success of interdisciplinary programs and asserts the importance of tenured/tenure track positions as well as other policies and practices that create equity with faculty in disciplinary departments. When she points to the uncertain future of interdisciplinary programs, she concludes that such programs depend upon faculty continuing to bring their particular perspectives, methods, and skills to the classroom, to the profession, and importantly, to scholarship that can influence thinking broadly in higher education.

Burkhardt addresses the current climate with lessons that can be learned from the closure of a college. His case study highlights the paradoxical needs of interdisciplinary programs or colleges. On the one hand, maintaining a healthy independence allows their innovative or non-traditional missions to thrive; on the other hand, cultivating integration and communication with

the established and successful mainstream organization positions them to give visibility to program outcomes and to build support.

As this issue of the journal goes to press, we learn of grievous threats to long-standing and highly regarded programs. Szostak, Augsburg, and Burkhardt offer lessons and frameworks that can help continuing and fledgling interdisciplinary programs make strategic decisions and prepare for the exigencies of organizational restructuring and for future integrative initiatives in research, education, and practice.