

Paracollege with their counterparts in traditional majors at St. Olaf College show that students in that interdisciplinary program showed more tolerance of ambiguity or paradox—in fact, they seem to seek out ambiguity.² These findings are confirmed by students in other interdisciplinary programs who show more receptivity to new ideas or who move beyond tolerance to a celebration of diversity.

Beyond these outcomes, the questionnaires completed by directors of interdisciplinary programs for *Interdisciplinary Undergraduate Programs: A Directory*³ provided anecdotal evidence that their students show:

More sensitivity to ethical issues (stemming, no doubt, from the humanities perspective included in courses traditionally limited to the social or natural sciences)

Ability to synthesize or integrate (from the distinguishing feature of interdisciplinary courses, that they pull together limited disciplinary insights into a more holistic understanding)

Enlarged perspectives or horizons, reduced privatism, and greater awareness of communal or public issues (from the topical, issue-oriented focus of most interdisciplinary courses)

More creative, original, or unconventional thinking (perhaps from the difficult task of integration)

More humility or listening skills (as students become conscious of the partial validity of *any* perspective including their own and how it can be enriched by learning from other perspectives)

Sensitivity to bias, whether it be disciplinary, political, or religious (probably from probing the assumptions underlying disciplinary perspectives)

Interdisciplinary courses have advantages for institutions beyond these educational outcomes for students:

The topical or issue-oriented approach of most interdisciplinary courses is inherently **more interesting** to students than survey courses or introductions to disciplines. For students who are often resentful of required general education courses, the motivation of an interdisciplinary approach may be invaluable.

Interdisciplinary courses can be designed to provide an efficient **introduction to the disciplines** themselves by showing how each discipline arrives at its distinctive perspective on the issue.

Interdisciplinary programs can provide an opportunity for administrators faced with tenured faculty in underutilized departments to **reallocate faculty resources** to where there is more student demand.

Interdisciplinary teaching offers an exciting form of **faculty development** since it necessarily stretches faculty, demanding that they come to grips with new perspectives that challenge long-held assumptions from their own disciplinary training.⁴