A. Undergraduate Assessment

Interdisciplinary Studies is a campus-wide program, Regents authorized to allow students to construct individualized, interdisciplinary BA programs with strong faculty advisement. While there are a few recently created Interdisciplinary Studies (IS) courses offered by IS faculty, IS programs depend upon drawing from existing courses in the UHM undergraduate catalogue. Accordingly, the following fundamentally concerns learning outcomes of the program as it was historically conceived. We address the question of assessing the new IS courses, subsequently.

1. Student Learning Outcomes (SLO's) of the Program

These outcomes may be stated as follows:

* To demonstrate the capacity to think across disciplines. We encourage students to be problem, rather than discipline, oriented, to recognize that information pertinent to problem-solution is not discipline-bound.
* To communicate effectively, both orally and in writing, linkages and connections in problem-solution. The writing of a narrative which justifies the array of courses in the program, is the first step in developing this capacity.
* To demonstrate independence of thought. This is encouraged, perhaps uniquely, not only by the effort to construct individualized BA programs, but by pressing students to expand the context and forms of inquiry. E.g., students interested in tourism may be encouraged to consider a course in the international economy or post-colonialism.
* To demonstrate “learning to learn” skills. This begins with the construction of the specifics of the major which requires initiative in determining what needs to be investigated and how it is to be investigated.

2. These goals are posted on our website: http://www.hawaii.edu/is/ and are central elements in the materials which we use in our Orientations (a preliminary session required of all students) and then in advising sessions with faculty advisors.

3. The Assessment of 2002/03

The 2002/2003 Survey was an attempt to monitor the perceptions of students in regard to their academic and personal experiences while in the program. This survey, funded by the Mānoa Chancellor's Assessment Award, is the third in a series of such evaluations (1985, 1988). However, the 2003 study is much wider in scope, and has benefited from a larger sample size than previous assessments.

A. Since as noted, prior to last year, when Liberal Studies became Interdisciplinary Studies, the program had no teaching component, we functioned only to advise students in putting
together upper-division, interdisciplinary, individualized BA programs. Accordingly, our interest in the survey was limited to assessing realization of the explicit goals of the program.

The assessment had three parts;

First, there was a survey mailed to 507 former students who earned their baccalaureate degrees from the University of Hawai‘i with a major in Liberal Studies; 120 alumni or 24% responded. The range of graduation years spanned over a decade, from Fall of 1989 to the Spring of 2002 including alumni from Fall, Spring and Summer graduation dates. The assessment instrument, a questionnaire consisting of 18 Likert-scale questions and 10 short-answer questions, also included information regarding alumni’s post-graduation studies, employment and income. (See excerpts from the survey, Appendix A.)

Second, all of the 253 current students were surveyed using a similar instrument. 92 students or 36% responded.

Finally, twenty students volunteered to do portfolios which were then appraised both in terms of evidence regarding attainment of our goals and suggestions on perceived weaknesses of the program. While the survey's provided excellent information on student perceptions and attitudes regarding the program, the portfolios gave us good insight into questions of performance outcomes.

Responses of alumni:

- 64% said that the program provided them with an excellent preparation for a career.
- 74% responded that the program developed problem-solving skills for life-long learning
- 71% indicated that the program helped them to develop new viewpoints.
- 91% said that there were key advantages to interdisciplinary study.
- 85% said that they would recommend the program to friends and family.
- 89% responded that they would give the program an overall high rating.

These numbers were generally supported by qualitative data which provided some additional detail. (See Appendix B.)

Responses of then Current Students.

- 79% believed that the program provided them with an excellent preparation for a career.
- 84% believed that the program developed problem-solving skills for life-long learning.
- 88% indicated that the program helped them to develop new viewpoints.
- 92% said that there were key advantages to interdisciplinary study.
- 86% said that they would recommend the program to friends and family.
- 82% responded that they would give the program an overall high rating.

Assessment of the advising process:
• 91% of alumni (96% of current students) enjoyed the opportunity to self-design their program.
• 81% of alumni (76% of current students) displayed a high degree of satisfaction with the advisor's academic assistance.
• 77.9% of current students agreed that the development of the proposal (done with the assistance of two advisors) helped to clarify their goals and objectives.

Perceived Problems and Weaknesses:

• 54% of alumni (65% of current students) indicated that the low profile of the program presented them with problems.
• 44% commented that a capstone or common seminar course would be valuable.
• In the qualitative portion of the survey, a significant number of students remarked on the absence of community among Liberal Studies students.

3. How the program produces the specific SLOs.

Our main goal is to foster critical interdisciplinary thinking on the part of students who are obliged to articulate a "proposal," which defines an interdisciplinary inquiry. Thus, students must construct, under advisement, a 36 credit upper-division program of study which draws on not less than three Departments in the University (most programs draw on many more than three). To do this, they must come to an understanding of the immense possibilities available in the University as represented in the UHM catalogue, and then see how the various courses in their programs integrate into an intellectual whole. A critical feature of this is the writing of the "narrative," a clear statement of the rationale for the course of study. Once engaged in the course of study, the IS major is a unique opportunity for students, regardless of the immediate motivations in any single course, to see that there are important connections as regards what occurs in the world and that they need to get clear on these connections in problem-solving.

The Portfolio Portion of the Assessment

In addition to the survey of alumni and current students, we invited current students to construct portfolios to be used as part of our effort to assess the quality of the program. Some 20 students participated. This portion of the assessment was completed early in the summer of 2004.

Considerable time and attention was put into developing the goals and guidelines for students for the construction of the portfolios. Only the first paragraph of this detailed document is reproduced in what immediately follows. Appendix C gives the full guideline.

Guidelines for Creating the Portfolio

The work samples included in your portfolio will come from the coursework in your major equivalent which you undertake in Spring 2003 and thereafter at UHM. The primary goal of the portfolio is to provide you a means of organizing and assessing what
you accomplish while you complete your required Liberal Studies coursework. As you
gather and review your collection of materials, we ask for the following specific items,
but we encourage you to include additional materials, which you value and which you
think would be useful for us to read, see or hear. For each item you submit, we request
that you tell us about when, where and why it was part of your learning and why you
decided that it represented you.

Analysis of the portfolios:

At one end there are the portfolios which show a considerable range of interdisciplinary
sensitivity, for example, "Women's Health." At the other end are those which have a more
"disciplinary" look, for example, "Second Language Studies."

1. There is a connection between degree of "interdisciplinarity" and

   (a) Whether the program is problem oriented or not, e.g., "Women's Health,"
"Political Theater," "Creative Cultural Expression," and the Environmental
Studies programs which focus on specific environmental concerns.
(b) Whether in the course of study, the student was exposed to a course or courses
which were taught in an interdisciplinary fashion, especially Ira Rohter's course in
environmental politics, Noel Kent's course in ES, many of the courses in
Hawaiian Studies, geography, and women's studies courses. These seemed to
have influenced the materials in the portfolio beyond work done in those specific
courses.

2. There is a connection between interdisciplinarity and critical thinking especially where
there is an explicit normative (problem) angle, e.g., environmental degradation, racism,
colonialism, sexism.

3. Some missed the point of the portfolio, despite our best efforts to make this clear.

The analysis suggests:

- The desirability of an early course in IS inquiry for all IS students.
- Encouraging courses in the major equivalent which are themselves interdisciplinary.
- Encouraging problem-oriented programs.
- Encouraging a normative angle of vision.

The portfolio assessment also indicates the desirability of interdisciplinary core courses
taught by IS faculty. We have embarked on developing such courses given our new capacities
which now include a teaching component for IS faculty. Newly designed courses include IS 330,
and IS 405 and 406, "The African Diaspora." Plainly, the current size of our staff severely limits
our capacities to extend to this effort. Similarly, we currently lack data for assessing these newly
constructed and taught courses, except for student evaluations (Appendix D).
In the ensuing months, we shall articulate the specific goals of these courses and identify means to assess them, including, for example, determining if there is progress in writing skills, in seeing interdisciplinary connections and relations, and in critical thinking.

5. How the 2002/2003 assessment data informed curriculum and administration

The evidence strongly indicates that the key goals of the IS major are being met. While the survey material did provide evidence that students believed that goals were being met, it did not however, tell us much about overall performance skills. The portfolio was, however, most useful in this regard and needs to be regularly administered. The evidence also confirms the desirability of the primary concept of Interdisciplinary Studies as it is presently constituted at UHM: the opportunity for students to generate individualized, upper-division, interdisciplinary programs under strong faculty supervision.

The perceived weaknesses have been addressed. First, the name change has taken us a long way toward overcoming the low visibility problem. A good part of the reason is that 'Liberal Studies' was both vague and misleading. Indeed, it was not just parents and employers who were unsure about the nature of the program, but so too were students and many of our own faculty.

Similarly, with the new capacity for IS faculty to offer courses under the IS alpha, we are beginning to address the problem of "community," in particular by thinking through the question of how we might manage capstone seminars.

6. General Education Requirements of IS majors.

Since our BA programs are interdisciplinary, in order to construct integrated courses of study, students need to develop the essential information-accessing and information-processing skills. It is not sufficient for them to have expertise in a narrow speciality; they need to grasp "the big picture"—an essential desiderata of General Education. Indeed, many of the programs integrate not only "the two cultures"—the sciences and the humanities, but encourage breadth of thinking within these "cultures."

Similarly, since all programs are student constructed, students need to be active and aggressive learners: They cannot passively accept as their course of study a list of courses set out in the Department listing.
APPENDIX A

Item #2: I developed problem-solving skills for life-long learning.

In a survey question designed to address the longer-term influences of a Liberal Studies education, almost 74% of alumni agreed (7 and above on a 9-point Likert-scale) that the Liberal Studies Program developed problem-solving skills for life-long learning. Approximately 24% of former students remained neutral on this issue (between 4 and 6 on 9-point scale) while three alumni (2.5%) felt that the Liberal Studies Program did not develop problem-solving skills for life-long learning.

With an interest in self-directed study already high for many students entering the Liberal Studies Program, it would be expected that students would carry with them a motivation for life-long learning. It is particularly significant to note that the high percentage of students who attest to the development of skills in their Liberal Studies education stands as a credit to the program. The interweaving of student’s initial motivation with a Liberal Studies education provides the groundwork for successful skill development in life-long learning.
Item #3: *The Liberal Studies Program Staff was an integral and helpful part of my education.*

The vast majority of alumni reported that the Liberal Studies Program (LSP) Faculty was an integral and helpful resource during their academic years. 80% of students (n=93) noted an agreement level of 7 or above on the 9-point scale regarding the helpfulness of the Liberal Studies Program Faculty. 17% (n=20) marked between 4 and 6 on the Likert scale, indicating moderate to neutral approval of staff facilitation. The remaining 3% (n=4) regarded the LSP staff as not being an integral part of their education or fulfilling their needs in a helpful manner.

The high percentage of affirmation in regard to this question reflects the attention of the Liberal Studies Program to the individual student and his or her academic progression. Alumni polled have indicated both quantitatively and qualitatively that the Liberal Studies Program’s resolve toward individual student interests allows for a unique form of student support that is less frequently witnessed in conventional majors.

Item #6: *I learned to value new viewpoints and opened my personal perspectives.*
Nearly 71% of alumni recorded a score of 7 or above on a 9-point Likert-scale indicating that they felt the Liberal Studies Program effectively helped them to open personal perspectives and assisted them in learning to value new viewpoints. Only a minority of graduates (3%) cited that they felt the Liberal Studies Program did not develop either new viewpoints or their personal perspectives. Approximately 25% of students felt that there was moderate to little enhancement in these areas.

The mean of the results for this question was above 7 (7.153846), indicating that a high overall average of graduated students felt that the Liberal Studies Program had provided them with broadened viewpoints and personal perspectives. In this regard, the aims of the program to instill academic growth and personal maturation are meeting with success.
Many graduated students commented on the “low visibility” of the Liberal Studies Program on campus. This observation was reflected above in the questions regarding the low profile of the program which attained results indicating that a majority of alumni (54%) had experienced moderate or great difficulty due to the perceptibility of the program at UH.

The Interdisciplinary Studies Program currently enrolls over 300 students. It might be mentioned here that this is nearly triple the number in the program a decade ago. While the enrollment rate is relatively high and students enjoy a great amount of flexibility in their academic achievements, it seems that were the visibility problem to be seriously addressed, there are immense possibilities for growth for the Program. To date, the Director has been reluctant to pursue aggressively enlarging the program since the current staff would not be able to handle many more students without sacrificing the quality of our advising mission.

The study showed that many alumni lamented the difficulty they had in explaining their major to potential employers. The name change from "Liberal Studies" to "Interdisciplinary Studies" certainly goes a long way toward overcoming this problem. Indeed, interdisciplinary studies is currently very much in vogue, it is very well recognized as a powerful way to organize undergraduate education and the benefits of such study are by now very well acknowledged.

Interdisciplinary Studies has been, in fact, the center and cutting edge of most interdisciplinary work at Mānoa, since it includes under its heading a very wide variety of interdisciplinary programs, e.g., "Environmental Studies," "Women's Studies," "Peace Studies." But the interdisciplinary nature of these programs has been obscured. Thus, while these existing programs offer courses taught under these titles, there is no doubt that these programs could and should also grow in numbers. More generally, the renamed Interdisciplinary Studies program at Mānoa provides a clear center for promoting, organizing and developing interdisciplinary work—as is the case at UC Berkeley and many other prestigious institutions.

A second insight which comes from the survey suggests that these programs lacked a sufficient sense of "community." Although the individualized programs of students are, or could easily be grouped, e.g., "Criminology" "Human Relations and Organizations," "International Studies," there is no one course which all in the group take as a required course for their program of study, either early on or later, as a capstone course. While taking courses in four or five Departments as part of their inquiry is interdisciplinary, what is sorely needed are courses which articulate (and demonstrate) an interdisciplinary approach to problem-solving with special reference to the range of problems to be addressed by the particular interdisciplinary program, "Criminology," (say) versus "International Studies." It goes without saying that in addition to the manifest pedagogic benefits, such courses would also establish the relevant "communities" of inquiry and alleviate anxiety generated by the present more "individualist" arrangement. With our enlarged staff, we are now capable of generating and teaching the necessary interdisciplinary
courses, under the current "IS" alpha numbers in the UHM catalogue. It seems obvious that these steps would also foster visibility.

Overall, as evidence in the qualitative materials, students spoke very highly and enthusiastically of their academic career with the Liberal Studies Program, giving sound support for the fact that 97% of alumni students said that they were happy that they had chosen to get their B.A. in Liberal Studies.
APPENDIX C

Guidelines for Creating the Portfolio
The work samples included in your portfolio will come from the coursework in your major equivalent which you undertake in Spring 2003 and thereafter at UHM. The primary goal of the portfolio is to provide you a means of organizing and assessing what you accomplish while you complete your required Liberal Studies coursework. As you gather and review your collection of materials, we ask for the following specific items, but we encourage you to include additional materials, which you value and which you think would be useful for us to read, see or hear. For each item you submit, we request that you tell us about when, where and why it was part of your learning and why you decided that it represented you.

Opening Statement: Your portfolio should have an opening statement where you introduce yourself, your aspirations and goals.

Work Samples: Include work samples from each of the areas of the Liberal Studies major curriculum. Since the portfolio is to demonstrate your competence in the subject matter, the work samples should represent your best efforts.

Reflective Statement with Each Work Sample:
All work samples must include an introductory summary statement maximum of two pages about the work sample that responds to the following questions:
- What was the assignment? Provide a narrative explanation of the assignment and include a copy of the assignment itself as provided by the course’s instructor.
- Explain the central concept or skill that underlies this assignment. Why is this concept or skill important to the particular discipline of the course?
- How does your work on this assignment reflect one or more of the major learning outcomes in this area of the curriculum?
- How has your knowledge in this area of the curriculum developed since you began the Liberal Studies program?
- How has this particular assignment added to, changed, or challenged your understanding of your major concentration

General Guidelines for Including Other Work Samples
- Include a work that best reflects your critical thinking skills
- Include something that shows you using an interdisciplinary perspective
- Include something that shows you engaging in historical analysis, if applicable
- Include something that shows you applying scientific reasoning to understand or explain the behavior of people or of nature
- Include something that shows you making an aesthetic analysis of a creative work, if applicable to your major

Optional: Submit materials which don’t satisfy any of the categories above but which you are especially proud of. For example, you might submit materials that were opportunities for you to think and talk about the intangible hard to assess, but important experiences resulting from
completing the Liberal Studies curriculum. Feel free to submit items and to explain to us in an attached note how that submission enriches our understanding of you and perhaps your peers. As you compile your portfolio, think broadly about the materials you might submit. In addition to papers you produce, equally appropriate for demonstrating your learning and achievement are audiotapes, films videocassettes, artworks, and web pages.

ME Course Syllabi: We would also like you to submit the syllabi of the courses in your major equivalents. We will analyze the course syllabi and curricula to see if the courses in fact covered the areas, issues, or themes that were part of the proposed curriculum.

Personal Statement:

The task of putting together your portfolio has given you a unique opportunity to think clearly and state in writing what you have accomplished so far through your Liberal Studies curriculum. After you have completed all of your entries, review what you have submitted. Then write about who you were and what you were like when you entered the Liberal Studies program and compare that with who you are and what you are like now. This is also the opportunity to assess how well the Liberal Studies program has fulfilled its promises to you as outlined in the mission and goals statement, and to recommend where changes are needed.

Compose a well-written personal statement which covers the following topics and anything else you want to include

1. How have you grown since you started your program?
2. What weaknesses are you still striving to overcome?
3. In which courses have you learned the most?
   What did you learn about the subjects covered in your ME coursework
   What did you learn about yourself?
4. If you could change one aspect of the curriculum of the Liberal Studies coursework, add a course, remove a course, or expand an offering in a particular area, what would you change?
5. How has the Liberal Studies Program helped you develop the knowledge, the skills and the confidence to embark on your career?
6. What should the Liberal Studies Program improve?
7. Describe how you put your portfolio together and how much time you invested in the process. Reflect on what you might have learned or affirmed through the process. Has the portfolio process been helpful to you? Why and or Why not? Do you think the work you did on this project merits at least one credit and should become part of the LS curriculum.
8. What are your plans for the future? What do you hope to have accomplished five years from now? Ten? Twenty?
9. Do you think you would have benefited from a capstone course?

TIPS for completing the Portfolio
Collect materials as you go along and keep the syllabus of each course included in the major. Write your reflections honestly. As you work on your portfolio, ask yourself the following questions:

- Does this portfolio accurately reflect the kind of person I am and what I have accomplished?
- What would a prospective employer think of me as a result of reading my portfolio?
- What should I add or change to showcase the significance of knowledge I have acquired and the contributions I am able to make?
- Am I proud of myself and is that pride reflected in my portfolio?
APPENDIX D

Summary of Course Evaluations

IS 398 (W): Computers and Cultural Transformation (Fall 2004)

There were following four desired learning outcomes in this course;

- to critically think about the role of technology in their life both from historical and contemporary perspective.
- to critically evaluate recent technology-based socio-economic changes and how they impact their life.
- to understand the role of new media technologies in perpetuating class differences.
- to come up with alternatives to traditional helplessness in the face of technological change and work towards developing a more empowering and self-directed rather than media-directed world-view.

A fairly standard course and instructor evaluation was given, along with the standard questionnaire of the Mānoa Writing Program about writing-intensive classes. Students rated the course and instructor highly with most checking off fives and fours on 1-5 scale.

Their written comments were perhaps more helpful in assessing realization of goals of the course, but especially their answers to the following general questions.

**Would you recommend this instructor [course] to students? Why or why not? & What did you especially like/dislike about the way the instructor taught this course?**

1. Yes, it is a critical analysis that makes you think in depth about the society and world you live in.
2. Yes, but would tell them that it isn’t a normal class. You have to think and form your own opinions rather than wait to be fed knowledge....
3. yes, interesting subject matter
4. yes, the subject matter is interesting and pertinent
5. yes, because it opens one’s mind and help to think “out of the box”
6. yes, I would, she is interesting and overall a good instructor.
7. It made me think about the social issues at hand. Made me realize/and discover more about the wide topic talked about in class

In future course and instructor evaluations, much greater attention will be paid to framing questions which more directly seek evidence regarding realization of the goals of the course.
IS 397 (W): *Native Americans and Native Hawaiians* (Fall 2004) sought to provide students with a contrastive review of the only native peoples of the United States by examining similarities as well as differences between Native Americans and Native Hawaiians in a broadly defined interdisciplinary perspective. Of particular concern were:

- historical developments characteristic of complex chiefdoms (such as those of southeastern North America and Hawai‘i) and the results of contact with Europeans (including introduced epidemic diseases, the loss of prime land, the overharvesting of local resources for a global market, and the overthrow of indigenous governments)
- the current debate about native peoples’ relationships to state and federal government agencies, their status within the nation, and their political sovereignty, which has inspired the proposed Native Hawaiian Recognition Bill (Akaka Bill) and which has frequently drawn on both nation-within-nation models and more independent arrangements by Native Americans for emulation
- contacts and relationships between Native Americans and Native Hawaiians in western North America and in the Hawaiian Islands as part of the fur trade, high-sea whaling, World War II, and since.

Student evaluations about the quality of the instructor and course included 21 standard questions, four open-ended questions permitting students to add additional comments, and the standard questionnaire of the Mānoa Writing Program about writing-intensive classes, responses to which were all highly positive. One student appreciated the class as an “excellent source for [understanding] current events [related to native peoples] as well as how history repeats itself and the impact it has on the present and future.” The class also came across as an opportunity of learning a concise and logical style of writing “that flows and connects to your next idea.”

A major concern in the future will however be to find a way to assess the students’ achievements of the specific goals of this class, including progress in interdisciplinary thinking.
IS 406  The African Diaspora (W, E, O)

IS 406 sought to give students an understanding of the African Diaspora in the Caribbean, Europe and the Americas, subjects rarely focused on in American Universities. In particular, this course aimed:

- To inform students of this diversity and the rich, vibrant, and influential culture of Blacks, collectively and individually, in America and around the world and to teach them something about themselves, their attitudes and stereotypes.

- To encourage an interdisciplinary approach which compared Black history, culture, identity, economics, oppression, and resistance of Blacks in different parts of the world, using literature, and the spoken word as transnational carriers from historical and contemporary perspectives.

Students’ evaluations from CAFÉ were standard: 23 questions and 7 open ended questions permitting students to write their personal evaluations. In almost every response students strongly agreed that:

- they were challenged intellectually

- learned a great deal of factual material and learned to recognize quality work in the field

- were stimulated to discuss related topics outside of class

- developed a greater awareness of societal problems, and changed some of their opinions about some topics because of the course.

In the 7 open-ended written evaluations a majority of students indicated that class discussions, presentations by students, and the personal experience of the professor were most valuable. In the global appraisal: considering everything, how would you rate this course, 7 students responded excellent, 6 students responded good out of a possible 15 evaluations that were handed in. In the global appraisal considering everything, how would your rate this instructor, 9 students responded excellent, 4 students responded good out of a possible 15 respondents.

The overall evaluations ranged from "Good" to "Great!" and included: "interesting," "challenging," "valuable," "I learned a lot about myself," "very interesting and informative," "A+", "I really learned a lot and was able to clear up some confusion," "intellectually stimulating," and "enjoyed it."