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The Social and Behavioral Sciences Curriculum Integration Project at Eastern Washington University: The Impact of the Project on Disciplines and the Impact of the Disciplines on the Project

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The Integration of the Social and Behavioral Sciences

Abstract

The College of Social and Behavioral Sciences at Eastern Washington University began and completed a three year project to integrate the curriculum of the College in order to address critical problems facing the social and behavioral sciences. These problems included: declining enrollments, competition with professional programs, overlapping curricula, duplication of courses, and lack of coordination among the disciplines of the social and behavioral sciences. A new model of a disciplinary major was developed and implemented that strengthened the theory and research curriculum for all disciplines by sharing and integrating resources. In addition, the curriculum took on a more career-oriented focus by the development of a series of interdisciplinary, career-oriented certificate programs. The Curriculum Integration Project had significant impact on the quality and structure of the disciplines in the College. Each discipline also had significant impact of the outcomes of the project, each in its own unique way. The effects on the disciplines and the effects on the project are discussed. A set of recommendations are presented to guide others in the integration of curriculum for a college as a whole.

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In 2000, the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences at Eastern Washington University received a three year FIPSE grant for its *Social and Behavioral Sciences Curriculum Integration Project*. The purpose of this project was to address the “critical problems facing the social and behavioral sciences” at Eastern Washington University and other universities throughout the country (Chertok and Cornelius, 1999, p. 1).

The *Social and Behavioral Sciences Curriculum Integration Project* attempted an approach to these problems that allowed for the integration of the disciplines in the social and behavioral sciences, but without a loss of disciplinary integrity. It did this by developing a curriculum model for the majors in the social and behavioral sciences that strengthened the role of theory, quantitative reasoning and research in all the disciplines focused on the disciplinary core, and increasing the career-focus of the curricula, thus strengthening the foundational, disciplinary and interdisciplinary curricula. The disciplines included were: Anthropology, Communication Studies, Criminal Justice, Economics, Geography, Government, History, Interdisciplinary Studies, Military Science, Psychology, Sociology, and Women’s Studies

This paper will address: (1) the problems of the social sciences, (2) the goals of the Social and Behavioral Sciences Curriculum Integration Project, (3) the accomplishments of the project, (4) the impact of the project on the social science disciplines in the college, (5) the impact of the various social science disciplines on the curriculum integration process, and (6) recommendations for colleges and departments considering interdisciplinary work in the social sciences. . (The next two sections of the paper were taken from the narrative of the FIPSE grant proposal for the Social and Behavioral Sciences Curriculum Integration Project. Chertok and Cornelius, 1999, pp. 2 – 9)

The Problems in the Social Sciences.

In the last six years, two international associations have devoted conferences to the crisis confronting the social and behavioral sciences and published their proceedings: *Symposium on: The Future of Sociology and the Social Sciences in the 21st Century* (McDaniel, 1999) and *Open*

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the Social Sciences: Report of the Gulbenkian Commission on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences . (Mudimbe and Jewsiewicki, 1996). The problems identified by these two conferences can be summarized as follows:

- **declining enrollments in core social and behavioral science disciplines;**
- **the loss of students from social and behavioral science curricula to professional schools and career-oriented programs;**
- **boundary disputes among the social and behavioral sciences that lead to overlapping curricula and duplication of courses; and**
- **the lack of coordination and cooperation among the disciplines of the social and behavioral sciences that increases competition for available resources.**

Declining enrollments in the social sciences can be attributed to many factors, the most prominent being the competition between core social science disciplines and professional schools. Even more detrimental to the social sciences has been the disciplinary boundary disputes among the social sciences. These disputes include divisions between more theoretical versus applied disciplines, economic versus political knowledge or social versus behavioral knowledge. In addition, social and behavioral science disciplines often work in isolation from one another thereby ignoring new interdisciplinary developments in and between their respective fields. As Doreen Massey stated at an international symposium on the future of the social sciences:

It is clear that our current structures are constraining... We continue to define disciplines by exclusion rather than by interrelation: we assume there are areas beyond a discipline's purview. And we define those areas in terms of subject matter rather than in terms of what one might call angle of approach. (Massey, 1999, pp. 6 & 7)

The Gulbenkian Commission on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences, an international

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commission created in 1993 to examine issues of boundary disputes and divisions within the social sciences, issued its report in 1996 entitled *Open the Social Sciences*. Their conclusion is that social scientists need to “take a hard look at their present structures and try to bring revised intellectual perceptions of a useful division of labor into line with the organizational framework they necessarily construct. If working social scientists do not do this, it will no doubt be done for them by administrators of the institutions of knowledge.” (Mudimbe and Jewsiewicki, 1996, p. 96)

Often the administrator's response to this challenge is to create more interdisciplinary programs. Yet such an approach can be viewed as an attack on the integrity of the disciplines and can be costly in terms of available resources. As the Gulbenkian Commission concluded:

But such multiplication (adding interdisciplinary programs) requires personnel and money. However, the reality of the world of knowledge of the 1990's, especially as compared to that of earlier decades, is the constraint of resources imposed by fiscal crises in almost every state. While social scientists, because of internal pressures generated by their intellectual dilemmas, are seeking to expand the number and variety of pedagogical and research structures, administrators are looking for ways to economize and therefore to consolidate. We are not suggesting that there has been too much multidisciplinary. Far from it. Rather, we are pointing out that organizationally this has gone less in the direction of unifying activities than in that of multiplying the number of university names and programs. (Mudimbe and Jewsiewicki, 1996, p.96)

The social and behavioral sciences need such unifying structures if they are to overcome the confusions, overlaps, and resource shortages that block substantial progress. Because the failure to cooperate among the social sciences can be very costly, some schools have decided to eliminate social science departments (Sociology at Washington University, San Diego State University and

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University of Rochester; Geography at the University of Pittsburgh) or to displace social science departments to other colleges within the University (Economics to Business at Murray State University and Central Arkansas University). (Boden, Giddens and Molotch, 1990; Coughlin, 1992; and Heller, 1990) Some institutions have taken the tack of subdividing the faculty and curricula of such disciplines as Anthropology and Geography along socio-cultural and physical lines and sending physical geographers and anthropologists off to the natural sciences. (Monaghan, 2000) Other schools have attempted to solve the problem by developing an interdisciplinary social science major (Washington University, University of Wisconsin at Eau Claire, and Eastern Oregon University). However, these new majors become more of a merger of disciplines rather than a curriculum built on the integration of strong disciplined-based departments. Often disciplines within the social and behavioral sciences work in isolation from or in competition with the other disciplines in the social and behavioral sciences. This competition leads to the duplication of courses and programs, the lack of coordination among similar programs, and the failure to use the strength of combined resources, which further exacerbates the problems of declining enrollments and declining resources among and within these disciplines

The Goals of the Curriculum Integration Project for the Social and Behavioral Sciences

Eastern Washington University proposed a new model for the integration of the curriculum for the social and behavioral sciences that included a college-wide foundational curriculum and the revision of disciplinary majors that, if successful, will increase enrollments while assuring the integrity and survival of the social science disciplines.

The model for the integration of the curriculum for the social and behavioral sciences consists of four parts: (1) an introductory course developed by each discipline; (2) a college-wide foundational curriculum for the social and behavioral sciences developed by the college as a whole; (3) a revised core curriculum developed by each discipline; (4) a set of interdisciplinary, career-oriented certificate programs developed by the disciplines working together through

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College committees; and (5) a capstone class for each major. The five parts of the curriculum are as follows: (See Figure One)

(1) An introductory course for each discipline. Each discipline has an introductory course or courses that serve(s) as an introductory survey of the discipline and often serve(s) the purpose of a general education requirement. For these reasons, we believe that the survey courses are useful. We also think that with the successful implementation of the new model that the nature of the survey courses will undergo significant changes as faculty rethink the presentation of their disciplines to the uninitiated and as they adapt to the new core college curriculum.

(2) A college-wide foundational curriculum for the social and behavioral sciences. The college-wide core curriculum is composed of foundational theory, statistics, and research methods courses needed by all social and behavioral science graduates. The **common foundational theory course** tentatively titled "The History and Philosophy of Theories in the Social and Behavioral Sciences," will give students a history of theory development in the social and behavioral sciences, as well as a framework for understanding, comparing and evaluating various theoretical orientations. The **college core statistics courses** will coordinate the resources from several departments to offer a common introductory statistics course and an advanced statistics course that will meet the agreed upon statistical knowledge required for any social and behavioral science graduate. The **research methods courses** will be coordinated among the departments so that a variety of research methods will be offered to students using the combined resources of the departments in the college. At present various departments offer courses on quantitative and qualitative methods, computer assisted data analysis, geographic information systems, historiography and anthropological field methods. Our intent is to encourage departments to require one methodology course of each graduating major, but to expand the range of opportunities for those majors (quantitative, qualitative, historiography, computer data analysis).

(3) A core curriculum for each discipline. The core curriculum of each discipline will be developed by each individual department. Totally, this core will be 25 to 30 credits and consist of the essential offerings for that discipline. The task of arriving at this core will require

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each department to rethink the distinctive nature and content of its discipline and, then, redesign its curriculum to reflect this disciplinary core. For instance, it can be argued that sociology is comprised of five central theoretical problems, each of which is reflected in a series of topically related courses, some of which are more general and others of which are more specialized and technical in nature. The sociology curriculum is composed of courses on social inequality, social psychology, large scale social organization, deviance and social change. Over time many departments have proliferated a number of different courses on each of these topics as new areas are created and existing ones are elaborated upon. At no time in the recent past have departments undergone a systematic review of their curricula. Departments are expected to retain many of their non-core substantive specialty courses, many of which will be used in interdisciplinary certificates. However, the rethinking of the core may reduce the proliferation of courses in the major and the duplication of courses with other disciplines while, at the same time, strengthening graduates grasp of disciplines by requiring majors to satisfy breadth requirements in the re-conceptualized core areas of their disciplines. The task at EWU will be for departments to streamline their curricula along the lines of its central disciplinary core areas. Departments will compress the number of credits in each major, reduce the number of thematically related courses, and refocus on the disciplinary core of their departmental curriculum.

(4) Career-oriented Certificate Programs The final component of the *Social and Behavioral Sciences Integrated Curriculum Project* will be a set of career-oriented certificate programs offered by departments within and outside the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. These certificate programs will be interdisciplinary, career-oriented sets of courses leading to a practicum, internship or service learning experience. Each certificate program will be 20-25 credits or no larger than one-fourth the size of the major. Proposed certificates include Geographic Information Systems, Children's Studies, American Studies, Leadership Studies, Conflict Management, Environmental Studies, and Social Research. A full complement ranging from pre-professional to vocational skill sets will be represented. Ultimately, the certificate program is a way to find practical vocational applications for traditional liberal arts disciplines.

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(5) Capstone Course in Major. Following a University requirement, each major will have a Capstone Course at the end of the major that will allow students to synthesize their disciplinary work and allow disciplines to gather end-of-program assessment data.

INTEGRATED CURRICULUM MODEL COLLEGE OF SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

- I. Introduction to the social and behavioral science major of choice.....5 credits

- II. Social and behavioral sciences foundational courses.....15 credits
 - Social and Behavioral Science Theory
 - Statistics
 - Introductory
 - Advanced
 - Research Methods
 - Quantitative
 - Qualitative
 - Documents
 - Field

- III. Disciplinary core coursework.....25 credits

- IV. Interdisciplinary Focused - Practicum Certificate.....20-25 credits
 - Geographic Information Systems
 - American Studies
 - Children's Studies
 - Gender and Sexuality Studies
 - Conflict Management
 - Leadership Studies
 - Social Research
 - Canadian Studies
 - Regional Economic Analysis
 - Global Economics
 - Wetlands Studies
 - Diversity Training
 - Environmental Studies
 - Health Care
 - Public History
 - Public Relations
 - Historic Preservation

- V. Capstone Course in Major.....5 credits

Figure One

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The Curriculum Integration Project poses four questions the resolution of which ultimately radically restructures the idea of an undergraduate major in the social and behavioral sciences. The project requires that faculty rethink the dual requirements of the introductory survey courses (s), determine the appropriate level of literacies,, establish the essential disciplinary core, and provide for topically focused, interdisciplinary, and internship-ending certificate programs. Resolution of the issues raised by the project ultimately leads to a radically restructured conception of the traditional disciplinary exclusive requirements of an undergraduate degree in the social and behavioral sciences. We believe that this restructured major will result in additional assessable learning outcomes.

Accomplishments of the Curriculum Integration Project for the Social Sciences

After two years work, the Curriculum Integration Project has accomplished the following: developed, piloted and assessed a set of college-wide foundation courses; developed proposals for five certificate programs as well as developed a series of courses needed for these certificates; sponsored a series of curriculum revision retreats for departments to reconsider and revise their core curricula in light of the new resources available.

Foundation Courses

Theory. A foundational theory course was developed for the college: **CSBS 310 – History and Philosophy of the Social and Behavioral Sciences.** This course is an examination of the philosophy and theories of the social sciences through a historical review of the social sciences and the perennial controversies in the social sciences. Students leave the course with the ability to identify, place, compare, and evaluate diverse, controversial, and context-bound social and behavioral science theories.

Statistics. Two college-wide statistics courses were developed. **CSBS 320,**

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Introduction to Statistics, is an introduction to descriptive statistics, inferential statistics, and nonparametric statistics. **CSBS 321, Computerized Statistical Analysis**, is an introduction to SPSS and its use for describing distributions, organizing multivariate data, drawing inferences, doing regression analysis, multivariate analysis and nonparametric tests. Students leave these courses as informed consumers of statistics who can select and implement a variety of statistical procedures.

Research Methods. Two new college-wide methods courses were developed. **CSBS 330, Integrated Social Science Methods**, is an introduction to the scientific method in the social sciences, core concepts and issues in social science methods, core group of methods for data collection, and core group of analytic techniques. **CSBS 331, Documents-Based Research Methods** is an introduction to documents-based research methods focusing on framing research questions, types of sources, scholarly ethics, evaluating and interpreting primary and secondary sources. These two courses join four other research methods courses that will be developed or adapted: **Field Research Methods, Qualitative Research Methods, Quantitative Social Research** and **Quantitative Psychological Research**. Students who complete these courses will be able to create and implement a research design exploring social and behavioral science research questions.

Certificates. Certificate proposals have been completed for **Conflict Management, Children's Studies, Geographic Information Systems, American Studies, and Gender Studies**. New courses in conflict management, mediation, and negotiation were developed to support the conflict management certificate.

All new courses were assessed with pre and post-tests of knowledge and by mid-term and final focus group sessions with the students conducted by the assessment coordinators for

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the grant. In addition, all departments and programs have completed reviews of their curricula and submitted revised curricula utilizing the aspects of the model major from the Curriculum Integration Project.

The Impact of the Curriculum Integration Project on the Social and Behavioral Science Disciplines

Whatever else may be said of the outcomes of the Curriculum Integration Project, it has clearly awakened in every discipline a sense of themselves and about themselves. The faculty in each of our departments and programs must consider the place of their discipline in the general education curriculum, their relationships to other disciplines in the social and behavioral sciences, and the distinctive nature and characteristics of their field of study as an academic discipline. In addition, they are being called on to rethink the minimal requisite theoretical, quantitative and methodological foundational literacy, the essential core areas of their disciplines, to anticipate the direction of disciplinary and interdisciplinary change, and how best to provide students with the kinds of tools to translate their academic interests into success in a career. Each discipline has adapted the model major in its own distinctive way.

Anthropology had to rethink itself as a discipline, even though it is one of the disciplines traditionally linked with the social sciences. Maintaining its own theory and field research methods courses, Anthropology added the college-wide foundation in theory, methods and statistics courses as choices available for their majors. They developed a set of interdisciplinary concentrations to link their majors to the other social sciences.

Communication Studies had to articulate its relationship to the social sciences. Several of the foundational courses were adopted to strengthen its relationship to the social sciences. This included using the theory course to strengthen and broaden the theoretical training of majors; the use of

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both the Integrated Research Methods course and the Documents-Based Research Methods course; and the requirement of statistics for a portion of its majors. Its disciplinary core included the social science areas of organizational communication, interpersonal communication, and media as well as the more humanistic areas of rhetoric and public communication and the more applied area of public relations. The Department is actively participating in two of the proposed certificates.

Criminal Justice had to decide whether to maintain the more applied, skills training approach it relied on previously, or to move toward a more theoretically-based social scientific approach. Although it maintained its exit internship requirement, much of the social science foundation course work will be used to integrate the program into the social sciences. The program is in the process of revising its core to balance the applied/theoretical dimensions.

Economics had to rethink its approach to general education via its introductory survey course by reassessing its contribution to the general education curriculum and as an attractive survey of the discipline. They are in the process of reassessing the need for a foundational requirement in research methods as well as exploring a series of degree tracks and certificates.

Geography had to define their links to others disciplines, particularly their relationships to the natural sciences and applied professional programs on campus. In addition, the faculty have set about updating, reconfiguring and thematizing the undergraduate curriculum. They have proposed to take the lead in the creation of several new certificates.

Government had to rethink itself as a discipline. The Government department is rethinking its relationship to the field of Political Science and exploring the possibility of incorporating into its major the requirements of quantitative literacy and research methods. In addition, they are expected to strengthen their interdisciplinary linkages to other programs in the social and behavioral sciences and the professional schools.

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The department of **History** has taken it upon itself to rethink the foundational areas of its curriculum with special reference to a need for a course in historical methods. It has also aggressively framed a series of area studies and topical certificates.

Interdisciplinary Studies is a free standing degree program located within the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences without a dedicated faculty or curriculum. The Curriculum Integration Project has offered the program a potential structure for an interdisciplinary degree in the social and behavioral sciences which would incorporate requirements in the foundational areas and for a certificate.

The department of **Military Science** is constrained by Federal regulations on its curricular offerings. While not active participants in the larger Curriculum Integration Project, they have been willing participants in the creation of several College-wide certificates.

Not unlike Economics, the department of **Psychology** had to rethink its approach to general education in recognition of the dual aims of introductory survey courses. The major challenge to the department has involved a rethinking of the essential disciplinary core calling on them to reassess the breadth of the existing undergraduate curriculum.

The department of **Sociology** has been a major contributor to the College foundational courses, but has had to rethink its disciplinary core and to expand the range of available certificates to its majors.

The Curriculum Integration Project has suggested to **Women's Studies** the possibility of the creation of an undergraduate major. As such, the faculty have begun to discuss then nature of the curriculum as an academic discipline including its foundational areas, core curriculum and the possibility of academically relevant certificates.

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The model major has been a complementary structure to the strengths and weaknesses of the curricula of the disciplinary majors in the social and behavioral sciences. It has maintained or enhanced the strengths of these curricula while, at the same time, correcting any weaknesses of these curricula. Furthermore, it has led to the development of interdisciplinary links among all these curricula and to the curricula of disciplines outside the social and behavioral sciences.

The Impact of the Social and Behavioral Science Disciplines on the Curriculum Integration Project

Each discipline had a significant impact on the project, each in its own unique way. Each discipline led to at least one significant change in the design of the curriculum integration. Taking them in order:

Anthropology. Anthropology brought to the Curriculum Integration Project a strong sense of their disciplinary core and contributed an alternate conception of the certificate as a concentrated area of study. These include concentrations in: Theory; Linguistics; Ethnology; Physical Anthropology; Archaeology; Religion; Third-World Development, Native American Cultures; Africa/African-American; Latin America; Europe; Canadian Studies, American Popular Culture, and Plateau Studies.

Communication Studies led the college in how to use internships and service-learning in the certificates and the curriculum as a whole. This discipline showed that work in the community can not only strengthen the career-focus of degrees but strengthen the knowledge base of graduates as well. In addition, the department broadened our conception of the foundation area of methods to include applied research.

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Criminal Justice. Along with Communication Studies, the Criminal Justice program demonstrated a long-standing commitment to having all the graduates of a large program participate in a practicum experience at the end of the academic program.

Economics. The department of Economics brought perhaps the strongest sense of a disciplinary core to the Curriculum Integration Project. Moreover, the curriculum imbeds foundational literacy within the disciplinary core curriculum. The department served an important additional role in developing a location for students to do applied research and engage in practicum experiences through the newly created Institute of Public Policy and Economic Analysis

Geography. The Geography program demonstrated the importance of developing interdisciplinary ties with the natural sciences in developing curriculum and career-focused certificates. In addition, the Geography program offered one of the strongest certificate programs, the GIS certificate. This certificate provides a marketable skill that is in demand in the social sciences, urban planning, and the natural sciences.

Government. The department of Government brought a strong sense of disciplinary structure to the Curriculum Integration Project. It did so through a series of topical and areal requirements of its undergraduate degree.

History. In another sense the department of History brought an equally strong sense of structure to the Curriculum Integration Project. They did so through the temporal and areal requirements of the undergraduate major. In addition, the History department broadened our conception of foundation literacy by developing a documents-based research course that proved to be of value to several other disciplines.

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Interdisciplinary Studies. One option of the Interdisciplinary studies reverses the logic of the importance of a post-academic internship experience by providing an option which allows credit for prior experiential learning. The Interdisciplinary Studies program is one that is frequently used for distance education. This program developed a new curriculum for distance learning that was based on the interdisciplinary foundation courses in the social and behavioral sciences. They were able to show that the interdisciplinary foundation of the social sciences is a good and flexible foundation for developing a new degree to be delivered by a distance format.

Psychology led the college in the development of an introductory and a computer-assisted statistics courses. They were able to show that they could offer these courses in such a way that majors from a variety of disciplines would be able to use the courses for their own particular purposes. In so doing, the department demonstrated a strong sense of the importance of foundational coursework to a variety of disciplines within the social and behavioral sciences.

Sociology. The Sociology department, not unlike the Psychology department, exhibits a strong sense of the importance of foundational literacy. In addition, the department has a long-standing commitment to interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary study as a component of their undergraduate degree requirements. Also, it has a long-standing commitment to the importance of internships.

Women's Studies. The Women's Studies program is by definition an interdisciplinary program on this campus. They have been among the strongest advocates for role of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary components in the Curriculum Integration Project. In addition, they have taken the College lead in the creation of several new and innovative certificate programs. They have raised the prospect that some fields of studies transcend the possibility of a uniform set of foundational courses and core-disciplinary requirements.

Recommendations and Conclusions for Attempting the Integration of the Curriculum in the Social Sciences

- 1. Each discipline has its strength that it can contribute to the process. This should be recognized and encouraged.**
- 2. Each discipline has deficits that can be strengthened by integrating their curriculum with other disciplines. Getting the disciplines to recognize these as deficits is the greatest persuasive task involved with such a project.**
- 3. At first, most disciplines find it difficult to see beyond their disciplinary borders. Once the process starts, however, they will agree that the most enjoyable part of the process is becoming aware of the viewpoints of other disciplines.. It needs to be pointed out to them that their students will feel the same way.**
- 4. Beginning a major curriculum integration project will probably lead to a generational split. Older faculty will be more resistant to change and younger faculty will be more open to change. Maintaining a mix of both viewpoints will serve as a good system of checks and balances. Neither side should get the upper hand.**
- 5. If you have at least 50% of the faculty in the college involved with the process, you will greatly increase the commitment of the faculty to the success of the project.**

6. **Although it is tempting to impose specific change on disciplines, it proves to be more beneficial in the long run to allow each discipline to determine the degree of change they will make.**

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