

## THE FAIRHAVEN INTERDISCIPLINARY CONCENTRATION

One of the purposes of higher education is to provide students with specialized study in a discipline of their choosing. This is usually referred to as a "major," and at WWU includes such fields as history, anthropology, chemistry, geography, political science, education, and so on. While Fairhaven students may opt for a traditional major at WWU, they may complete a self-designed, Interdisciplinary Concentration instead. About one-third of all Fairhaven students have graduated with a major, two thirds with a Fairhaven Concentration.

### MAJOR OR CONCENTRATION? –HOW TO CHOOSE

Each option has its particular advantages. The departmental major provides a program of study designed by specialists in a recognized discipline. The Fairhaven Concentration, on the other hand, allows maximum flexibility to the student in designing a program to meet his or her own academic, vocational, and/or personal goals. The Concentration generally requires more self-appraisal than a major, it is interdisciplinary, and it places the chief responsibility for its design and development in the student's hands.

Other factors which should be considered before a choice is made between a major or a Concentration include the vocational implications and necessary preparation for post-graduate studies or advanced professional work. In either case, consultation with Fairhaven faculty is a necessary first step towards choosing the program that best fits the student's own needs and aspirations. The Fairhaven Transition Conference can greatly assist in this process.

### DESIGNING A CONCENTRATION

There are several ways to approach the Concentration. Some students have integrated fields normally represented by two or more departments. A student interested in history, literature, political science and philosophy might use the "history of ideas" to integrate those interests. Another approach might result from an interest in a particular topic which requires detailed preparation in areas not normally related. Using this approach a student designed a Concentration in "water resources," a study requiring work in chemistry, geology, physics, and resource management.

Students have sometimes found it to their advantage to design a Concentration even though their central interest was in one discipline. The requirements of a major usually do not allow the freedom desired to pursue issues which overlap with other disciplines. For example, a major in economics raises historical, sociological, and political questions which students might explore in more depth through a Concentration; students in the arts often seek greater intellectual breadth by supplementing their studio work with specialized study in other areas such as literature, perception, communication theory, and history; many students working towards teaching certification have constructed programs consisting of a variety of related studies, activities, and tutoring experiences in addition to the required professional courses offered by the School of Education. (Note: Those interested in working towards certification should see the "Guidelines for Teacher Certification" before planning their program.)

### PREREQUISITES

Students should consult with Fairhaven faculty early in the planning process. The Foundations or Transfer Seminar (Fair 101/201/301), Writing Competency demonstration (Fair 208) and the Transition Conference (Fair 209) are all required before undertaking a Fairhaven Concentration. Each quarter Fairhaven offers Fair 303, a seminar for students ready to develop an acceptable Concentration proposal.

## GUIDELINES

There are four parts to the Concentration: (1) *the proposal*, (2) *the course work*, (3) *the senior project*, and (4) *the final summary and evaluation*. You must complete all four parts in order to graduate with a Fairhaven Interdisciplinary Concentration.

The proposal is a plan of study and includes a list of proposed classes and other activities that you, in the consultation with faculty and others, believe will best fulfill your goals. It is developed in consultation with a faculty committee during the quarter you register for the Concentration Seminar (Fair 303). Because students may have some difficulty in matching learning experiences with goals, we encourage you to register for the Concentration Seminar early in the process.

The proposal includes the following: (1) a written rationale, (2) the selection of a Concentration committee and chairperson, and (3) the selection of appropriate courses and other learning experiences.

The Rationale. The heart of the proposal is the rationale. Basically it is a statement of intent which establishes the intellectual framework for your entire Concentration program and as such should offer a reasonably systematic description of what you intend to do. Even though the proposal is written before you do the bulk of your work, it should represent conclusions drawn from consultations with faculty and from considerable independent thought on your part. The rationale must include a clear account of how the various areas of the Interdisciplinary Concentration are to be related--the points of view that make the areas mutually intelligible, the methods which will be used to integrate them, the scheme that will guide the selection of classes, independent studies, and other learning experiences in an increasingly related way. The Concentration Seminar (FAIR 303), its instructor, and your committee (which may be tentative at this point) will assist in giving direction and coherence to your plan. The work of writing the rationale normally takes place in the Concentration Seminar. Plan to write a number of drafts of the rationale. This may take a quarter or more; in fact, it is necessary that the proposal develops over time in order for you to gather the best available advice, explore and research possibilities, think and re-think ideas, and develop the conceptual vocabulary that best describes your interdisciplinary intentions.

The Concentration Committee. As you begin thinking about the design of the Concentration, you should also be working with faculty in one or more of the specified areas. This will lead to the formation of a supervising committee of three or more members. While at least one Fairhaven faculty member must be included (as chairperson), the committee can include other University faculty and other experts in your field.

The members of the committee serve as advisors at all stages of the Concentration process and should be consulted as often as you find it necessary or desirable or as required by the committee. Eventually it is the Concentration committee who must approve and evaluate your work. Because of the important functions served by this committee, we urge you to consult several faculty before deciding whom to ask.

The Selection of Courses. A proposal must list the courses already completed, the courses underway, and those which you intend to include. It is expected that your Concentration will include a minimum of 30 credits with a "Pass" or "C" or better grade taken outside Fairhaven College. This requirement can be met by taking courses in other WWU colleges and/or any other accredited college or university. You may use courses taken before entering Fairhaven. (Reminder: In order to graduate from Fairhaven you must complete 50 credits outside Fairhaven, but only 30 need be included in your concentration.)

When the rationale has been written, the committee established and the courses selected, you must then get the signed approval of the committee members, the Concentration Seminar instructor, and file the completed, approved proposal with the Program Advisor. THIS MUST BE DONE THREE (3) QUARTERS PRIOR TO GRADUATION. After filing your proposal you must be enrolled for at least three more quarters (they need not be concurrent) and complete a minimum of 36 credits during that time.

## THE COURSEWORK

A Concentration may include a number of learning experiences in addition to the 30 credits of coursework to be taken outside Fairhaven College. Many Fairhaven seminars may be relevant to your Concentration. Independent study projects may be designed to focus on key areas of inquiry. Relevant work experience and/or travel study projects may be included, as may community field activities involving theater and music groups, art shows, film programs, political and other internships, volunteer work, and so on. In short, special studies, concrete experiences, and practical applications of many kinds may be included so long as you can demonstrate how they relate to the overall goals of your Concentration. While there is potential for earning credit for all of these activities through the independent study program, you may include activities which do not yield college credit but which are central to your Concentration.

Concentrations should include opportunities for students to pursue their scholarly interests through a variety of means, including formal coursework, independent study, and applied work in their fields. These opportunities should be balanced. As a guideline for the inclusion of independent study in concentrations, the faculty have set a range of no less than 10% nor more than 25% of the credits in the concentration to be taken in independent study or internship credit (excluding the senior project). If a concentration proposal falls outside this range, a rationale should be included in the concentration proposal. If revisions to the concentration course list after filing causes the percent of ISP credits to fall outside this range, a rationale should be separately developed by the student, be approved by the concentration committee and filed with the concentration in the student's permanent file.

## THE SENIOR PROJECT

The senior project should be seen as an identifiable extension of the concentration's rationale and course work. As with other parts of the Concentration, the selection and carrying out of the senior project must be done in consultation with your committee. The Senior Project is registered as Fair 401 through the Fairhaven's Independent Study program. The independent study proposal is sponsored by your chair or another member of your committee approved by all members of your Concentration Committee.

There are a number of possible forms a senior project may take. These are discussed below by way of guidance; however, you are free to devise some other form by which to fulfill this requirement so long as your committee agrees with that selection.

(1) A paper elaborating the ideas set out in the concentration rationale. Such a paper would demonstrate how the methods and concerns of one discipline have been used to explore subjects of inquiry in another. For example, one student combined economics with environmental sciences. She developed a firm grasp of how our economic system affects the environment and how environmental legislation is often at odds with economic planning. In her senior project she sought to give examples of the inter-relationship between economic and environmental planning, to explore contemporary thinking about economic and environmental priorities, and to compare economic strategies with the issues of environmental quality. These are topics introduced in her proposal; the senior project was her chance to deal with them in detail.

(2) A thesis dealing with one issue of central importance to the concentration. The advantage here is that it allows the student to bring the knowledge gained in a variety of studies to bear on a single topic of interest. Examples here include "Nationalism and Racism in the South Since 'Brown vs. the Board of Education'"--an extensive paper that narrows a Concentration in comparative cultures to an area of special and personal concern. In a senior thesis of this type all the issues mentioned in the proposal may not be explored, but it may test your ability to define the most important of them.

(3) A research project. Such a project would use skills and methods gained in the Concentration. One student studied the shoreline of the south end of Lake Whatcom for his Concentration on water resources. His study used methods from chemistry, biology, geography, history and resource management--knowledge he had gained in the coursework of this concentration. His thesis did not focus on central theoretical issues as in (2), but on research he conducted in the field.

(4) Portfolio of student's work. Such a portfolio should demonstrate what you learned and serve as a cohesive statement of your intellectual and creative development. This is often the most valuable type of senior project for students in the creative arts. The portfolio may be a collection of short stories, an assembly of photographs, some representation of sculptures or paintings, or a series of scholarly papers. Some of the portfolio will be done solely for the senior project, and you should include examples of the most advanced quality of your work. The portfolio must be accompanied with a critical discussion of the work itself, an articulation of the student's own efforts in light of the historical developments of the field, or perhaps a paper exploring the history of a particular style of conception. One student presented a portfolio of his paintings, together with an essay in which he detailed the relationship of his own work to the artistic issues that were crucial to Paul Klee. Another student included both a number of short stories and a paper on the subject that provided their frame of reference: the social responsibility of the writer as demonstrated in the 19th and 20th centuries. The purpose of the critical discussion is to describe how your creative endeavor is informed by your understanding of the culture that surrounds it.

(5) Series of demonstrations or lectures. Many students in the performing arts do a series of demonstrations in lieu of a portfolio. Again this must be accompanied with a critical discussion of the work in some larger social or intellectual context. One student of media and contemporary art produced a set of video tapes and staged musical performances to fulfill part of his senior project. He accompanied this work with a paper discussing the role of electronic media in contemporary art forms. One student in history/literature gave a series of "public" lectures.

(6) Teaching a seminar. While it is possible to offer a student-led seminar unrelated to the senior project, this approach is especially valuable if teaching of some sort is an eventual goal of the Concentration. It not only offers a chance to test the strength and clarity of your ideas, but is necessarily concerned with the practical problem of helping others learn what these ideas are. Whether you provide the primary instruction or co-teach with others, this option requires the selection of subject matter, the design of a reading list, a description of content and approach, and a method of evaluation for the participants. All of this must be approved by both your Concentration Committee and the Curriculum Committee at least two quarters in advance. Examples of student-led seminars include: "Child Sexual Abuse: The Community's Response," "Ethnic Literature," "Celtic Mythology," "Orchard Management," "Stress, Play and Health" (a collaboration of students and a faculty member), "Red Man's Land, White Man's Law" (with several faculty).

(7) Practicum of community service. Students in political theory, counseling, education, or social service often choose this as a way to gain field experience and to test their ideas in practical and concrete ways. One student has worked extensively with community agencies designing educational programs in sex education for the mentally handicapped. Another used her experience with community agencies dealing with child abuse to provide the core of her senior project. Others have worked with such

organizations as Legal Aid, Womenscare Shelter, the Farm Workers' Migrant Ministry, Planned Parenthood, and The Whatcom Land Trust. As with all other options, a practicum must be accompanied with a paper analyzing the social and intellectual issues involved.

## FINAL SUMMARY AND EVALUATION

At the completion of the senior project you must prepare a final summary and evaluation of your entire Concentration which includes an evaluation of coursework, an evaluation of the senior project, an evaluation of any non-curricular learning experiences, and a discussion of the general areas of the Concentration. The Advanced Seminar (Fair 403) provides the opportunity to complete at least a draft of the Summary and Evaluation which must be approved by your chair in order to get credit for the seminar.

Members of the Concentration Committee must give their signed approval after you have completed the final draft of your summary and evaluation. This approval indicates that all four parts of the concentration have been satisfactorily completed. The signatures are obtained by you at the bottom of a copy of the original form that accompanied your proposal, to which you have attached your Summary and Evaluation and your Senior Project.

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The faculty of Fairhaven College believe that the Concentration program offers you unusual opportunities for personal initiative and intellectual and creative achievement, opportunities which require, above all, that you take responsibility for you own education and are able to defend the visions its reflects. It is not the only option open to Fairhaven students, but those who choose it are encouraged to make the best use of all resources available to them, both at Fairhaven and elsewhere, and the pursue their work in the spirit of intellectual integrity, self-challenge, and creative inquiry.

## CONCENTRATION TITLE

The selection of the Concentration title is an important decision which should be carefully considered. The title appears on the final transcript and it is likely to be read and interpreted by "outsiders" such as prospective employers, graduate school admissions officers, etc. The title should reflect the fields of interdisciplinary study and at the same time convey the particular focus of the concentrated study. Avoid over-generalization and overspecialization; avoid using words or phrases common to traditional majors; avoid lengthy titles. Do choose a title which you can live with some time after graduation.

Consult with your committee members on your title. Concentration titles, because they are student designed, are reviewed and approved by Fairhaven's Curriculum Committee and Western's Academic Coordinating Commission. Committee members evaluate titles primarily in terms of clarity and meaning and non-duplication of majors or professions already available at other schools, colleges or universities.

## CONCENTRATION PORTOFOLIO AND STUDENT RECORDS POLICY

Fairhaven College assumes that all documents related to your Concentration--from its development to conclusion--are open to others (available primarily to students who are undergoing the same process). Generally, the Concentration Proposal is made available only after a student's graduation. Senior Projects and Summary & Evaluation statements are not made available unless the graduate provides an extra copy for a sample file. In keeping with regulations pertaining to privacy and confidentiality standards, however, you may request (in writing, please) that your concentration materials not be open to others.

## CONCENTRATION/GRADUATION APPROVAL STEPS

- (1) The Proposal. The filing of your written proposal--including committee signatures and Fair 303 instructor's signature--with the Program Coordinator, who signs as staff advisor, completes this step. The rationale statement, list of intended courses/credits in the Concentration, and other expectations set forth in these Guidelines are to be filed by you.
- (2) The Title. The filing of the Concentration title with the Program Coordinator at the time of senior credit evaluation completes this step. As mentioned above, the title is subject to approval.
- (3) Application of Graduation. "Advanced to candidacy" status means that you have completed a final credit evaluation and official application for the degree with the Fairhaven Program Coordinator. Fairhaven's credit evaluation includes a review of overall credit requirements, a review of Fairhaven's core requirements (Stages I, II, and III of the curriculum), a list of courses and credits to be completed, a final summary Concentration course list (with any changes approved by your Chair), and any other information pertinent to candidacy status.
- (4) Degree Clearance. The Program Coordinator will clear you for the degree when all requirements listed on the last program planning form are completed. For students completing Concentrations, the Concentration Summary and Evaluation, Senior Project and Committee signatures are due the last day of the quarter.