

IPAC Activity Description

Name of Activity

Interdisciplinary Conversations Hour

Contributor

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Brief Description of the Activity

The Interdisciplinary Conversations Hour is an activity that is designed to provide interested individuals with an opportunity to talk informally with faculty and staff on campus who are engaged in distinctive interdisciplinary pursuits. Each event in this series will feature an invited guest. The guest may, for example, be the director of an interdisciplinary program, a distinguished scholar, or an innovative teacher. The hour is, indeed, intended to be conversational in nature. Slide shows will be discouraged. The script will be: introductions around the table (5 minutes); introduction of the invited guest (5 minutes); short set of remarks by the guest about their interdisciplinary work (5 minutes); informal discussion (15 minutes); fixed format Q&A between the host and the guest (10 minutes); informal discussion (20 minutes).

Interdisciplinary Nature of the Activity

The Interdisciplinary Conversations Hour inherits its interdisciplinarity from the interdisciplinarity of the programs, research, and teaching represented by the invited guests. Moreover, each invited guest will be asked a particular sequence of questions midway through the hour that explicitly explores the interdisciplinary nature of the featured program, research, or teaching. The questions will be prefaced by two remarks that many researchers take to be hallmarks of interdisciplinarity:

1. According to Julie Klein (2010), "Integration is widely viewed as the litmus test of interdisciplinarity." Allen Repko (2012) abstracts the following definition of integration within the context of interdisciplinarity from a wide variety of sources: "Interdisciplinary integration is the cognitive process of critically evaluating disciplinary insights and creating common ground among them to construct a more comprehensive understanding. The understanding is the product or result of the integrative process."
2. "Interdisciplinarity," Klein (2010) reports, is associated with (1) "bold advances in knowledge," (2) "solutions to urgent social problems," (3) "an edge in technological innovation," and (4) "a more integrative educational experience."

The questions that will be put to the invited guests are these:

1. Does your endeavor meet the litmus test of interdisciplinarity? That is, can you identify and say a few words about a "more comprehensive understanding" that has resulted from, or that you believe is being forged by, an integrative process associated with the endeavor that you are representing?
2. Would you please order the four connotations of interdisciplinarity suggested by Klein with respect to the endeavor you are representing today -- from most salient connotation (with respect to your endeavor) to least salient connotation. Additionally, would you please elaborate on your top choice with respect to your program or research or teaching?
3. What do you think is the most distinctive aspect of the the program or activity or teaching initiative that you are representing today, in terms of its presence on the Oswego campus?

It is important to recognize that although the underlying theme of the conversations in this series is the investigation of a relatively strict interpretation of interdisciplinarity, IPAC embraces interdisciplinarity in a much broader sense that includes multidisciplinary and transdisciplinarity. Some guests will represent programs, research, and teaching that have a clear affiliation with these latter forms of scholarship. This is good! Understanding differences in types of scholarly pursuit will enrich our generally understanding of scholarship.

Relationship to Interdisciplinarity at Oswego

Interdisciplinarity at Oswego will benefit from these in-depth conversations in a number of ways:

1. Individual interdisciplinary programs or activities or teaching initiatives may benefit from an opportunity to reflect upon the interdisciplinary nature of other programs and activities and teaching initiatives.
2. Pockets of interdisciplinarity on campus may establish working relationships with other pockets of interdisciplinarity on campus, resulting in the enrichment and possible expansion of interdisciplinary endeavors.
3. Disciplinarians working at the boundaries of their fields who attend these conversations may find the discussions pivotal with respect to their making a decision to further explore interdisciplinarity in their own work.

IPAC Support

Use of the conference room each fourth Thursday afternoon of the month when college is in session from 3:30 to 5:30.

Registration for the Interdisciplinary Conversations Hour.

Advertisement of the Interdisciplinary Conversations Hour.

Relevant Dates

S13 F13 S14 F14 S15