

MEMO

To: The UVM Faculty Senate
From: Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate, Stephen Everse, Co-Chair
Date: February 7, 2022
Re: Approval of a Proposal for a New PhD Program in Transdisciplinary Leadership and Creativity for Sustainability

The Curricular Affairs Committee approved a proposal from the Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources (RSENR) and the Graduate College for a new Ph.D. program in Transdisciplinary Leadership and Creativity for Sustainability at our February 3rd meeting.

The RSENR Curriculum Committee unanimously endorsed this Proposal at its October meeting and brought it to the October 12th RSENR faculty meeting. The RSENR faculty voted to approve this new Ph.D. proposal by a vote of 28-1 (with 2 abstentions). On November 4, 2021 the Graduate Education Committee unanimously approved the proposal pending clarification that were subsequently addressed.

Program Description and Rationale

This 75-credit, post-baccalaureate program is designed as the first totally online Ph.D. program at the University of Vermont. The program is built on the successful M.P.S. in Leadership for Sustainability (MLS). The proposed Ph.D. program increases the focus on the Humanities. The program is created in response to the growing call for Ph.D. programs and scholarly knowledge generation and leadership practices that can meet the complex interrelated challenges of these times (including but not limited to climate change, systemic inequity, racialized violence, cultural genocide, accelerating loss of biodiversity, and more).

Synopsis of the Curriculum

The total number of credits required to fulfill the Ph.D. degree requirements is 75. The program's course of study includes 12 credits of pre/corequisite coursework, a 15-credit core curriculum, the option to transfer in up to 24 credits of prior master's degree credits, and variable elective coursework.

The program centers applied leadership and creative practices within a core curriculum that focuses on decolonial, practice-based research methods that draw from and engage with critical theories across arts, humanities, social science, and sustainability fields. Twenty-four credits are assigned to doctoral dissertation and research.

Intended Audience

The Transdisciplinary Leadership, Creativity, and Sustainability Program is an innovative graduate program that is designed for mid-career leaders, organizers, and practitioners who are interested in meeting the complexity and uncertainty of this moment with a sustained practice of knowledge production that is rooted in transdisciplinary, creativity and applied leadership in service to a

sustainable and equitable future. The program, delivered remotely, will allow students to remain in their positions and home area with the intention to use local issues as the source of research.

Learning Objectives

- Apply ecological and systems change theory and leadership to complex contexts/conditions in service to an equitable and sustainable future;
- Apply creative practices and methods throughout development of original scholarship and leadership practice;
- Express advanced skillfulness in a suite of relational and inquiry-based practices and methods for generating knowledge and responding to relevant leadership questions;
- Situate scholarship, leadership, and creative practice in relationship to theoretical, epistemological, and ontological perspectives;
- Contribute original research/scholarship that is relevant and useful to leadership practice and the complex challenges facing their communities, organizations, environments, and social movements;
- Make explicit connections between their scholarship, creativity, and leadership as invited by the promise of transdisciplinary practice.

Justification and Evidence for Demand

Graduates will be prepared to be competitive for faculty positions in top-ranked universities and colleges as well as leadership positions that are unique to their specific field or sector. We also expect that some students will stay with the organizations or institutions that they currently work. Built into the program is the ability to identify research questions in the work environment and create analytical solutions for application.

Need for the Program

This program's practice-based emphasis provides students with the opportunity to address relevant local and regional leadership questions with practical research intended to transform leadership practices and bring equity and sustainability to the forefront of leadership across organizations, institutions, and social movements. Through UVM and state and national connections, the program's capacity to conduct cutting edge relevant research in partnership with the communities on the frontlines of catalyzing change will grow.

Evidence of Demand

In 2020, RSNER worked with CDE to conduct a market survey of MLS graduates to gauge interest in the concept. Results showed an overwhelming interest in an online/low-residency Ph.D. program based in a similar structure and approach as the MLS program. 82% of those surveyed indicated significant level of interest in such a program. A pilot program, launched in 2021 for students in NR with a clear objective of enrolling in the Ph.D. program, enrolled 14 students with no publicity.

Relationship to Existing Programs

The program will be the first UVM program delivered entirely at a distance. Additionally, the letter of support from the Dean indicates that this is the first program of this type in the country and will provide a new model of leadership preparation. This program will support the research, teaching and programming of multiple other Ph.D. programs on campus.

Compare Features/Components to those at Other Institutions

This program will be a totally remote program, like programs that are offered at Union Institute, California Institute of Integrative Studies, Preston College, and the University of Waterloo. The most similar program is at the University of Wisconsin, an Ed.D. in Educational Sustainability. The Wisconsin program is a three-year 54 credit program offered specifically for educators.

Connections to existing UVM programs

The proposed program will complement other doctoral offerings, including the Ph.D. in Natural Resources, the Ph.D. and Ed.D. in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, the Ph.D. in Food Systems and the Ph.D. in Sustainable Development, Policy, Economics and Governance.

Comment on Substantial Concerns Raised During the Comment Period and the Proposers' Response

1. Concern was raised related to the reach out to the humanities, with the thought that there was significant breadth and depth that could contribute to the proposed program.
Response: The proposers noted that they had reached out extensively and had every intention on of keeping the opportunities for collaboration open as the program launches.
2. Concern was raised about maintaining academic rigor in a fully remote program.
Response: The proposers indicate that rigor is not necessarily defined "differently" in this program. The context for practicing rigorous research/scholarship is different. Utilizing transdisciplinary/humanities/social science methodologies that are participatory and applied, PhD students will be generating new scholarly knowledge in the context of the challenges facing their communities/organizations/sectors
3. Concern was raised regarding completing the program in the UVM prescribed 9-year time frame and maintain full time employment
Response: The program is for individuals who have completed a master's degree and can bring in up to 24 credits toward their PhD program. MLS students may to carry 12-15 credits/year (esp. when the coursework has predictable workload that can be planned for) while simultaneously maintaining their professional careers.

Curriculum

- Provide an overview/summary of the requirements for completion
- GPA of 3.0 or above
- Successful completion of 75 post baccalaureate credits

Required Courses

Course & Number of Credits	Relation to Program	Frequency	Faculty/Unit	Enrollments/Source of Students
<i>NR311 Leadership for Sustainability (3 Credits)</i>	<i>Pre or corequisite</i>	<i>Annual (fall)</i>	<i>Kolan/Vea/Talley/ Pinto/TwoTrees RSENR</i>	<i>20-30, including students from MLS program</i>
<i>NR388 Ecological Leadership (6 Credits)</i>	<i>Pre or corequisite</i>	<i>Annual (fall - spring)</i>	<i>Kolan/Vea/Talley/ Pinto and many professional affiliates: RSENR</i>	<i>20-30, including students from MLS program</i>
<i>NR312 Power, Privilege and Catalyzing Change (3 Credits)</i>	<i>Pre or corequisite</i>	<i>Annual (spring)</i>	<i>Kolan/Vea/Talley/ Pinto and many professional affiliates: RSENR</i>	<i>20-30, including students from MLS program</i>
<i>NR372: Transdisciplinary Leadership & Creativity (6 Credits)</i>	<i>Core Curriculum</i>	<i>Annual (fall - spring)</i>	<i>Kolan, Pinto, Kapil, Talley: RSENR</i>	<i>10 (cohort building course)</i>
<i>NR373: Transdisciplinary Methods and Modes of Inquiry (3 Credits)</i>	<i>Core Curriculum</i>	<i>Annual (fall)</i>	<i>Team taught module approach: Ivakhiv, Vivanco, Kolan, Kapil, Georgiou, Pinto, Reyes, Talley, Vea, Clark/Keefe: RSENR</i>	<i>15-20, including graduate students from other graduate programs</i>
<i>NR474: Creative Practice and the Dissertation (6 Credits)</i>	<i>Core Curriculum</i>	<i>Annual (fall-spring)</i>	<i>Team taught with faculty and practitioner- scholars: Kapil, Georgiou, Pinto, Kolan, Ivakhiv, Vea, Vivanco</i>	<i>15-20, including graduate students from other graduate programs</i>
<i>See elective courses described in the section above</i>	<i>Electives</i>	<i>Variable</i>	<i>Variable</i>	<i>Minor changes in enrollment for elective courses which will lead to additional revenue for other units.</i>

The total number of credits required to fulfill the Ph.D. degree requirements is **75**. The program's course of study includes 12 credits of pre/corequisite coursework, a 15-credit core curriculum, the option to transfer in up to 24 credits of prior master's degree credits, variable elective coursework (described above which can include a chosen certificate or micro certificate of Graduate Study); and a minimum of 20 dissertation research credits.

Electives

- PSS 312: *The Ecological Foundation*

- NR385: *Environmental Thought and Culture Research Seminar (or Environment and Culture in the Anthropocene)*
- NR395: *Advanced Environmental Humanities*
- NR395: *Sustainability Seminar*
- NR395: *Rotating summer MLS seminar topics*
- NR341: *Ecological Economics Theory* (occasionally offered online)
- NR394: *Independent Study*
- EDCI 380: *Foundations in Education for Sustainability*
- EDCI 380: *Methods in Education for Sustainability Immersion*
- EDLP 380: *Professional Problems in Education: Inequality in Education*
- EDLP 449: *Dissertation Writing Seminar*
- EDSP/CSD 274: *Culture of Disability*
- EDFS 314: *Modes of Inquiry: Critical, Decolonizing and Arts-Engaged Approaches to Research*
- EDFS 347: *Introduction to Qualitative Research*
- EDFS 348: *Analyze and Write Qualitative Research*
- EDFS 396 (proposed as EDFS 301): *Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies*
- EDFS 396: *Race, Justice, and Education*
- EDFS 396: *Genders and Sexualities in Education*
- PSS 313: *Participatory Action Research (PAR) & Transdisciplinary Approaches*
- PSS 314: *Agroecology, Food Sovereignty, and Social Movements*
- PSS 311: *Introduction to Agroecology* (low residency)
- Two new Humanitarian Studies Courses (names/titles coming soon)

Student will also have the opportunity to participate multiple micro certificates offered across the campus.

New Courses (All are in the process in Course Leaf)

- NR372: *Transdisciplinary Leadership & Creativity* (6 Credits)
- NR373: *Transdisciplinary Methods and Modes of Inquiry* (3 Credits)
- NR474: *Creative Practice and the Dissertation* (6 Credits)

Admission Requirements and Process

The Director and an Admissions Committee for the proposed program will review and recommend applicants for admission. Undergraduate degree in a related discipline is required. The Director and an Admissions Committee for the proposed program will review and recommend applicants for admission. Undergraduate degree in a related discipline is required. Those students who have not completed the MLS program will be required to take a 12-credit sequence addressing foundational leadership and decolonial practices. A minimum GPA of 3.0 is required.

Anticipated Enrollment and Impact on Current Programs

- This year's enrollment pilot enrolled 14 students, FY 23 forecasts 24 with a maximum in FY26 of 45.
- There is adequate capacity in the department

Advising

Oversight of advising will fall to the program director. Faculty teaching in the program will be assigned advising within workload. RSENR will be accountable for the program evaluation.

Assessment

The assessment plan runs on a three-year cycle and includes direct, indirect, and developmental assessment components.

Direct Assessment:

- Every year, a team of faculty/practitioner-scholars will review a sample from students' year 1 portfolio. Reviewers will evaluate the materials to assess the degree to which students are meeting programmatic learning outcomes.
- Beginning in year 3, every two years, a team of faculty/affiliates will review a sample of completed written comprehensive exams and dissertation proposals using a rubric designed to assess the degree to which students are meeting programmatic learning outcomes.
- Dissertations will be assessed by a team of faculty/affiliates using a rubric designed to assess the degree to which students are meeting programmatic learning outcomes.

Indirect assessment:

- Learning Outcomes: An electronic survey of recent graduates will be sent every October asking students to rate and describe their overall experience in the program, self-assess their achievement of learning outcomes, and provide feedback on specific programmatic experiences and elements. The survey will also ask about graduates' career impacts & plans. The program coordinator will prepare a brief summary of the results for the Fall TLCS faculty/affiliate meeting each year.
- Every three years, an alumni survey will be sent out to graduates from the previous five years

Letters Gathered in Support

- Dr. Katharine Shepherd (CESS)
- Dr. William Falls (CAS)
- Dr. Ernesto Mendez (CALs)
- Dr. Chris Koliba (SDPEG)
- Dr. Eric Bishop von-Wettberg (Food Systems)
- Dr. Luis Vivanco (Humanities Center)

Summary

The proposal is for a 75 credit PhD program. The unique aspect of the program is a totally online delivery. The program is geared to working professionals and the emphasis is on translational research as students identify and solve real time issues in the workplace as a component of their doctoral work,

The emphasis is on multidisciplinary collaboration and the humanities are seen as a strong focus in identifying approaches to leadership and culture change. The program builds on the successful MLS program. It is anticipated that the current need for individuals with the skills the program hopes to cultivate will draw leaders from around the country and potentially internationally.