

Office of Interdisciplinary Studies
May 23, 2008

To: Russell Osgood, Paula Smith, Jim Swartz

From: Marci Sortor

Re: Annual Report 2008

It is my pleasure to submit this, my third annual report on the activities and accomplishments connected with the Expanding Knowledge Initiative (EKI). As I reflect on this past year in regard to the EKI, I am struck by the sense that we are entering the second phase of its implementation. Many faculty members have taken advantage of the Common Ground Lunches to form communities based on scholarly interests, several of these have developed new courses and position proposals this past year, and we are reaching the point where a number of our departments are ready to contemplate making a commitment that their faculty members will teach collaborative or otherwise interdisciplinary courses on a regular and frequent basis. This past year we also saw the emergence of the next generation of new curricular efforts and new ways of bringing faculty and students together. The EKI is increasingly part of the work of so many individuals and groups.

At the beginning of the implementation of the EKI, I expressed the hope that this strategic initiative would not be simply additive but transformative. In this third year, this is indeed becoming the case. The EKI now permeates much of what we do. Its implementation is being normalized as part of the work of the Dean's Office, the Executive Council, and a number of individuals. This year, for example, the Executive Council was deeply engaged in crafting policies for the review and promotion of interdisciplinary faculty, Associate Deans Jon Chenette and Kathleen Skerrett crafted a successful grant proposal that will support the goal of developing Middle Eastern Studies by funding a term appointment in Arabic, Mark Levandoski obtained HHMI funding for the next stage in interdisciplinary collaboration in the sciences, the Librarian of the College Richard Fyffe and Director of ITS Bill Francis crafted a vision of the way in which the library and ITS should support strategy one (of which the EKI is an important part), both Jon and Kathleen helped groups of faculty members work on various interdisciplinary initiatives, and the Second Year Retreat is now under the purview of the Tutorial and Advising in the First Two Years Committee. It is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish "regular" proposals for faculty positions from EKI position proposals, and new faculty members—regardless of whether they came to Grinnell as an EKI or a regular appointment—desire to participate in the interdisciplinary enterprise that Grinnell has begun. The changes are rapid and I believe will soon be dramatically apparent to us all.

In the work of implementing the EKI I have collaborated closely with Interdisciplinary Fellows Bob Grey and Clark Lindgren, and the members of the Advisory Board: Vince Eckhart, Lesley Delmenico, Tammy Nyden-Bullock, Wayne Moyer, Monty Roper, Sam

Rebelsky, Susan Strauber, and student fellow travelers Eric Olson '08 (SGA vice president) and Caitlin Carmody '08. It has been an honor to work with such thoughtful, creative and highly committed leaders.

In this report I will discuss:

- EKI appointments
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EKI Appointments and Searches

This year marked the second group of EKI appointments. A multi-department search for a specialist in Film Theory and History resulted in the appointment of Theresa Geller. As I discussed in last year's report, the appointment in Film Theory and History will add an important area of inquiry to our curriculum, build on existing faculty interest in teaching with film, and take advantage of our strong film collection. Computer Science also made an EKI-appointment, Jerod Weinman, whose addition to the department will enable all members of the department to involve themselves on a regular basis in interdisciplinary teaching and will help leave-proof the department. The search for a third position approved in 2006/07, Neurophilosophy, will take place next academic year.

Searches for appointments in Policy Studies, Spanish/Latino(a) Studies, and Middle East history/religion will begin next fall. The proposal in *Policy Studies* was the product of several years of discussions and recent summer workshops involving faculty members in science and social studies and to some extent the humanities. Policy studies has connections to the Rosenfield Program and to a number of the other EKI initiatives (GDS, the EKI "Geo" appointments, and the "Environmental Challenges and Responses," "Human Rights and Human Dignity" initiatives). It also builds on existing resources such as Grinnell-in-Washington, DC. The position in *Spanish/Latino(a) Studies* has as its goals the reduction in Spanish course size by increasing their number, the development of

a new curricular area, and freeing up other members of the department to offer interdisciplinary courses. The position in *Middle Eastern History and Religion* is the result of two years of meetings and discussions among a broad group of faculty members. Jointly proposed by the departments of History and Religious Studies, it builds on considerable student and faculty interest in the Middle East and recent offerings in Arabic instruction. It will also free up members of both departments to participate in collaborative and interdisciplinary teaching. Last, an expansion of two contracts in Religious Studies will enable further contributions to the EKI, particularly to the Humanities Core initiative.

Curricular Initiatives

Collaboration and Coherence

An exciting development in our EKI offerings has been the creative ways in which faculty members have approached collaborative teaching. These include (as I have discussed in previous reports) a variety of shared theme courses, courses that can count toward one or two majors, and a number of looser but still meaningful collaborations that bring faculty members and students of two or more courses together for an assignment or a discussion. At the time that I write, it is too early to know whether in the fall of 2008 there will be as much collaboration among Tutorials as there was this past year.

Another exciting development is that we are beginning to see coherence among some of our EKI-related course offerings. In 2008/09, six courses based on film (in the Tutorial, history, the languages, religious studies, and English) will complement and benefit from offerings by our new specialist in *Film Theory and History*, for a total of nine courses dealing with film. Nine new courses on the environment testify to the impact of our new “Geo” appointments in *geology* and *geography* and to the way in which the AB’s invitation to the faculty to develop courses addressing *Environmental Challenges and Responses* has stimulated curricular innovation and built on our existing strengths in Environmental Studies and Prairie Studies. Four new courses will speak to *Policy Studies* next year. I believe that in a few more years the result will be a number of new areas that have real curricular depth. I also believe that a number of singular courses exploring an interdisciplinary theme will always have a part to play in our curriculum.

EKI Course Offerings for 2007/08

Sixty-six EKI-type courses were offered this year (this figure is updated from my mid-year report). These included (1) collaboratively-taught, cross listed and concentration-specific courses, (2) courses added to the curriculum by our new EKI appointments, and (3) courses carrying a departmental designation but identified by the teacher as drawing in a significant way on the methodologies and issues of more than one discipline. Over half of these courses (35) were new offerings and half courses that we have offered for some time, a testimony to the fact that while the EKI is new our interest in this kind of scholarship and learning is not.

EKI Course Offerings for 2008/09

At the time that I write this report, sixty-two courses planned for 2008/09 fall into the categories of collaboratively-taught, concentration specific, cross-listed, or divisional. Including departmentally-designated courses identified by their teachers as being interdisciplinary or integrative, Grinnell College will offer next year at least 109 EKI-type courses, forty-five of which are new. Attached to this report is the updated list of the 2007/08 EKI-type courses and a list of the courses to be offered in the upcoming 2008/09 academic year.

EKI-Type Courses for 2008/09

Collaboratively-taught courses	9 (six of these are new)
New* interdisciplinary, integrative, concentration specific, cross or divisionally-listed courses, or offered by new EKI appointments	22
Ongoing interdisciplinary, integrative, concentration specific, cross or divisionally-listed courses**	31
New interdisciplinary or integrative courses carrying a departmental designation	17
Existing interdisciplinary or integrative courses carrying a departmental designation	30

*Courses offered for the first time within the inception of the EKI are counted as new

** On the advice of the AB, I do not include MAT/SST 115

Initiatives Sponsored by the Advisory Board

This year the AB initiated discussions regarding two areas that it believes offer good potential for the coordination of existing faculty and student interests and the development of new areas of curricular development: “Environmental Challenges and Responses” and “Human Rights and Human Dignity.” Copies of the two invitations are attached at the end of this report.

Environmental Challenges and Responses

This past fall, the AB issued an invitation to the faculty to explore ideas for curricular development and possible appointments addressing “Environmental Challenges and Responses.” This initiative builds on the strong foundations of our Environmental Studies concentration, the Center for Prairie Studies, our superb field station at CERA, and long-standing interests of our existing faculty members.

The results of the invitation have been exciting. Thirty-five people joined a preliminary Common Ground Lunch on this theme and four spin-off groups formed to explore various ideas that emerged from that first lunch. In response to the invitation, Kathy Jacobson worked with a group of faculty members to develop a collaboratively-taught seminar entitled “Environmental Challenges and Responses.” This seminar will be

offered both semesters next year, and will be administered by Larry Aspler. Jon Andelson also has proposed “Living in Place Sustainably” as a course offering for 2009/10. Additionally, in February Larry Aspler, Keith Brouhle, and Vince Eckhart and I joined faculty members from twenty-two other liberal arts colleges in a Carnegie Mellon-funded Faculty Career Enhancement workshop to explore interdisciplinary teaching and research, using “Environmental Challenges and Responses” as our team project. Last, a related workshop on “Analyzing Environmental Conflicts: a Multi-disciplinary Approach to a Case Study in the American Southwest” is scheduled for this summer.

In all, nine new courses related to the environment will be offered next year.

Courses offered First Semester 2008

- ENV 195.01 Environmental Challenges and Responses (Aspler/Jacobson) *multiple sections; counted as two courses*
- ENV/GDS 295.01 Climate Change, Development and the Environment (P. Jacobson)
- ENV 295.02 Sustainable Agriculture: Ecology and Public Policy (A. Broadmoore)

Courses offered Second Semester 2009

- ENV 195.02 Environmental Challenges and Responses (Aspler/Jacobson) *multiple sections; counted as two courses*
- ENV 195.01 Natural Hazards and Disasters (L. Aspler) *first offered in 2007/08*
- ENV 295.01 An Environmental History of Food (D. Campbell)
- ENV 495 Senior Seminar: Africa (D. Campbell)

These new courses join those offered by “Geo” appointments Larry Aspler (Physics/Geology) and Eric Carter (Anthropology/Geography) and on-going ENV courses offered by David Campbell:

- ENV 125 Introduction to Earth Systems Science and labs (L. Aspler)
- ENV 195 Nations and the Global Environment (D. Campbell)
- SST 295.03 Introduction to GIS (E. Carter)
- SST 295.02 Health Geography (E. Carter)

The next step in furthering the Environmental Challenges and Responses initiative is to explore ways to include legal, ethical and social perspectives. The development of Policy Studies is likely to help contribute to this task.

As perhaps no other cluster of courses and interests has yet done, this effort has important extra-curricular impact as well. Students, staff and faculty members developed successful proposals for a student *Eco House* and *Environmental Dorm Coordinators* for 2008/09. I expect, too, that as our Wind Turbine project advances, we will have related extra-curricular (and I hope co-curricular) activities.

Human Rights and Human Dignity

In the spring, the AB issued an invitation pertaining to “Human Rights and Human Dignity.” This important theme draws on Grinnell’s existing strengths as represented by the Rosenfield Program, the Center for International Studies, Grinnell-in-Washington, DC, and Peace Studies, and encompasses faculty and student interest in issues of genocide and identity studies. We will begin a concerted effort to move this initiative along in 2008/09. Wayne Moyer plans next semester to bring a speaker or two who can help frame the issues and a Rosenfield Symposium addressing human rights is tentatively planned for 2009/10.

Re-drawing the Line between Curricular and Extra-curricular

Interdisciplinary scholarship dissolves the lines between the classroom and “extra-curricular” activities, because in many cases this kind of learning is focused on issues facing our communities and our world. Whether it is a course such as “Living in Place Sustainably” and its connections with the local economy or the establishment of a student “Eco House,” a number of the initiatives emerging from the EKI are likely to have some kind of experience that takes the student learning experience out of the classroom.

Learning Outcomes Assessment

Another accomplishment of the Advisory Board this past year has been the development of a list of learning outcomes associated with collaboratively-taught and interdisciplinary courses. The AB developed this list after a literature review and consulting with the faculty in division meetings. I have circulated the outcomes list among faculty members who have taught one or more EKI-type courses in the past year or who are planning to teach one next year and have asked for their reactions. I expect in the next few weeks to revise the outcomes list based on their feedback. I append a list of the outcomes to this report.

I expect that, as we continue to explore learning goals distinctive to interdisciplinary and collaboratively-taught courses, we will also initiate discussions about how we can best achieve these. The Advisory Board has organized a number of lunches treating interdisciplinary and collaborative teaching in the past three years and is committed to modestly increasing these in the upcoming year.

Scholarly Communities and the EKI

Common Ground Lunches

We have continued to facilitate faculty collaboration in the development of new curricular initiatives through Common Ground Lunches. This extremely popular vehicle for developing “grass roots” engagement with the Expanding Knowledge Initiative provides the venue for many discussions about (1) teaching and scholarly interests and how to support them, (2) course and program development, and (3) the development of EKI faculty position proposals. During the 2007/08 academic year we supported twenty-two lunches. Six of these lunches were organized by members of the Advisory Board on the topics of “Human Rights and Human Dignity,” “Environmental Challenges and Responses,” different kinds of collaborative teaching, early career faculty issues in regard

to the EKI, and area studies concentrations (the last in partnership with the Center for International Studies). Ninety-four faculty members—well over half of the faculty—attended at least one of these lunches. Many were engaged in more than one (total lunch attendance for the year was 322). A list of the lunch topics for 2007/08 is attached at the end of this report. Descriptions of the lunch topics are at http://www.grinnell.edu/offices/dean/eki/facultyresources/2007_08lunches/.

Faculty Clusters

Kathleen Skerrett – first in her role as a member of the Advisory Board and then as Associate Dean – has worked with a number of faculty groups to develop models of academic communities to facilitate curricular and scholarly collaboration. One such model is the Faculty Cluster, which provides a framework for developing and maintaining a community interested in a particular set of issues. At present Faculty Clusters exist for Peace Studies, Queer Studies, Early Modern Studies, Disability Studies, and the Study of Race, Ethnicity, Class and Gender.

Second Year Retreat

The second annual retreat for second year students took place September 7-9, 2007. The theme for the retreat was taken from the lecture that Dr. Martin Luther King delivered at Grinnell College in 1967, “Remaining Awake during a Revolution,” and was connected to a Rosenfield Symposium celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the extraordinary symposium at which Dr. King spoke. As was the case last year, the retreat focused on challenging students to think deliberately about the nature of education and about their goals for their time at Grinnell College. Steve Andrews, Associate Professor of English, delivered the plenary lecture. End-of-retreat evaluations were extremely positive. Between 94% and 100% of participants agreed or strongly agreed with a series of statements about the goals of the retreat. There was one exception: a statement about gaining a clearer sense of life goals (admittedly a difficult and ever-changing prospect) garnered a somewhat lower 81% level of agreement. I attach a copy of the retreat program to the end of this report. The summary of the retreat evaluation can be found at <http://www.grinnell.edu/offices/dean/eki/officeinterdiscstudies/reports/secondyearretreats/>.

Sixty-four second year students attended the retreat. While this represented a good increase over the 2006 retreat attendance of 48, it was still well below the 100 or so that we had expected. We had no difficulty recruiting volunteer faculty, staff, and upper-level students to help plan and run the retreat. This year’s faculty and staff facilitators included: Sheree Andrews, Doug Cutchins, George Drake, Bob Grey, Jean Ketter, Celia Knight, Clark Lindgren, Kathleen Powell, Mark Schneider, Kathleen Skerrett, and Joyce Stern. The retreat benefited from the leadership of the student facilitators who helped plan the activities, oversaw the retreat participants during the programmed activities as well as during free time, and led much of the discussion. I was particularly pleased to see the level of representation from our POSSEs. Our student facilitators were: Christy Boeckholt ’08, Lauro Franco ’08, Neil Finnegan ’08, Sandra Herrera ’08, Katie Lee ’09, Laura Lienemann ’08, Richard Luong ’09, Conor McGee ’08, Eric Olson ’08, Raji Pokhrel ’08, Madeline Raimondo ’08, Emma Ryan ’08, and Jessica Starling ’08.

Associate Dean Kathleen Skerrett is in charge of next year's retreat, and will bring together the retreat with the work of the Tutorial and Advising in the First Two Years Committee. I look forward to seeing how Kathleen applies her expertise in advising, student life, and teaching in designing the retreat.

Interdisciplinary Fellows

Grinnell College has been well-served by its Interdisciplinary Fellows Jin Feng, Bob Grey and Clark Lindgren. They have been instrumental in planning the second year retreat and in providing leadership in developing and offering interdisciplinary courses. In doing so, they succeeded in involving other faculty members and the effects of that involvement persist in the form of shared-theme Tutorials and collaboratively-taught courses. I cannot think of three better people to have performed this service for the college, its students and faculty. Interest in serving as a Fellow, however, has declined. We may want to revisit something like the Interdisciplinary Fellows in the future but are not at present seeking to fill the three positions.

Looking Forward: Plans and Issues

Faculty Appointments: Competing Visions and Needs

It is my belief that the key goals of enabling our current faculty members to participate in the EKI and developing new or enhancing current areas of new knowledge are for the most part complementary. Since we add new EKI positions at the rate of two or three a year, however, and have only just now concluded the decisions for the third year of searches (and the second of appointments), we tend to feel as though we swing back and forth between the two extremes. It is important to remain alert to the implications of each appointment for both of these goals, but it is also important to keep the cumulative impact of the faculty expansion in mind. This larger view will become more evident as we continue to make appointments. Take, for example, the two appointments made this year in Film and Computer Science. Separately, neither fully meets both goals. Taken together, they move Grinnell College forward toward fulfilling the EKI. Pursuing these goals was complicated this year—owing to enrollment pressure on courses caused by our exceeding last fall our 2009/10 goal of 1,500 on-campus enrollment—leading some to question how we should proceed with the EKI appointments. We should keep in mind that as we stabilize student enrollment and the faculty continues its planned expansion, this particular crisis should resolve itself. Meantime, we must be alert to the sometimes competing purposes for the EKI appointments as we contemplate what we hope to accomplish in the last three years of implementation of the EKI faculty expansion.

Early Career Faculty

For a significant proportion of our early career colleagues, the EKI is part of Grinnell's established tradition and increasingly they are attempting to reconcile the goals of the EKI with the circumstances of their own appointments. Two Common Ground Lunches hosted by AB member Tammy Nyden-Bullock focused on early career faculty members. The message coming from the lunches is that our newest colleagues are excited by the prospects of the EKI, but that we need to help them explore ways in which they can participate in light of their other career goals for their first years at the college.

The experiences that early career faculty members have regarding the EKI are mixed. Some have been encouraged to participate in interdisciplinary teaching and some have been discouraged from doing so. In general, the unease often felt regarding the tenure process is compounded by questions regarding whether contributions to interdisciplinary teaching and research will be valued. Happily, many of the lunch participants are interested in participating in collaborative and interdisciplinary teaching and some are already doing so. I was also pleased to see that in the second of their gatherings, early career faculty members took the initiative to explore ways in which they might be able to involve themselves in this kind of teaching while still meeting current departmental needs.

As we complete the faculty expansion as part of the EKI, some of the department-based constraints will ease and our early career faculty members will find more opportunities to participate in collaborative and otherwise interdisciplinary teaching. Beginning this year, individuals appointed specifically as interdisciplinary specialists will have the option of a somewhat different review process that should ameliorate some of the concerns expressed at these lunches. However, to the extent that nearly all of our new appointments want to participate in the EKI, questions about how interdisciplinary teaching and research will be evaluated will not be limited to our “EKI appointments.” Steps that we can take now include organizing a meeting of early career faculty with representatives from the Dean’s Office and the Personnel Committee. We should also explore some of the concerns of early career faculty members and then follow up with departments regarding how their most junior members can be mentored.

Enabling Existing Faculty Members to Participate in the EKI

An early goal for the implementation of the EKI was ensuring that the expansion of the faculty would enable existing faculty members to participate in the initiative. This is a process that of course takes time and we are still in the early days of the expansion: next year we will have a total of 4 EKI appointments on campus. Furthermore, differences in department sizes and curricula have a significant impact on the ability of an appointment to free others to teach EKI-type courses on a regular and frequent basis.

Nonetheless, we are beginning to make progress in realizing this goal in a number of departments. The paths to its realization are several. In one case, a simple expansion of the department has made this possible, while in another a shared expansion combined with the development of a single common introductory course will soon provide sufficient flexibility. In another case, it is a recent restructuring of the major and a willingness to explore interdisciplinary courses that can support the major, and in 3 others it is a combination of existing interdisciplinary courses and a few new offerings. Significantly, in only one case have the members of these departments sat down together to discuss how they would take advantage of this, so there is still work to be done to ensure that these departments explicitly incorporate with EKI courses into their staffing plans. In the case of some other departments, it may be extremely difficult to accomplish the goal of freeing up colleagues unless they are willing to consider changes to their curricula. I want to underscore that I have only approached a subset of the departments to discuss the prospects of enabling all of their members to participate in the EKI. I intend to expand these discussions to include all departments over the next few months.

Course Clusters and Concentrations

At the time that I wrote last year's report, I fully expected that in the fall we would finalize a proposal for course clusters. A course cluster is a group of thematically-related courses identified by a group of faculty interested in exploring shared themes. Identification of these courses as a cluster will help students interested in those themes craft their curriculum. A much "softer" way of organizing a course of study than concentrations, a course cluster would have a fixed period of existence after which participating faculty members could decide to re-establish or discontinue it. During the fall, work on the clusters took something of an abrupt turn as discussions turned away from courses and toward faculty communities. The need for something like "course clusters" however, has only increased over this past year. I expect that we will attempt to finalize a description of course clusters by early this next fall so that these can be represented in the course schedule in time for second semester registration. The AB's return to course clusters next fall should help also contribute to our returning to the EKI's charge to "re-envision the concentrations."

The questions of the role of concentrations in delivering an excellent liberal arts education and whether there is an optimal number of these structures remain, in my mind, important, especially as a number of the curricular initiatives being developed could very well result in additional concentrations. To the extent that concentrations bring with them required courses that must be staffed, the increase in their number should be carefully considered. This past year, Advisory Board members Wayne Moyer and Monty Roper organized a Common Ground Lunch with David Harrison, the director of the Center for International Studies, to discuss possible synergies among the various area studies concentrations. A second lunch organized by David revealed considerable interest, but that more work is needed to explore the relationship of area studies to other international topics.

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Reviewing this past year's accomplishments, I am struck by the vision and energy that my faculty and administrative colleagues have devoted to the Expanding Knowledge Initiative. We still have a good distance to go—in terms of EKI faculty appointments, enabling all faculty members to participate in the EKI, reviewing our educational goals for the concentrations and other curricular structures, continuing and expanding our discussion about how we teach collaboratively-taught and otherwise interdisciplinary courses and our goals for such courses, and finalizing our vision of "new knowledge" at Grinnell College—but there is no doubt that we will reach our goals. It has been an exciting and humbling experience to share in this work.

List of Attachments

- Interdisciplinary and Collaboratively-taught Courses for 2008/09
- Interdisciplinary and Collaboratively-taught Courses for 2007/08
- Invitation to Develop Courses and Position
- Proposals Related to “Environmental Challenges and Responses”
- Invitation to Develop Courses and Position Proposals Related to “Human Rights and Human Dignity”
- List of Common Ground Lunches 2007/08
- Learning outcomes for Collaboratively-taught and Other Interdisciplinary Courses
- Second Year Retreat Program “Remaining Awake During a Revolution: Challenges and Opportunities”
- Second Year Retreat 2007 Evaluation Summary