

**The Hewlett Clusters at the University of New Mexico: an interdisciplinary curricular model in which music and other disciplines have been integrated with the humanities, social sciences and sciences**

By

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**Abstract Of Proposal**

**The Hewlett Clusters at the University of New Mexico: an interdisciplinary curricular model in which music and other disciplines have been integrated with the humanities, social sciences and sciences.**

During the last two years, the University of New Mexico has sponsored interdisciplinary curricula featuring music and the other arts disciplines integrated with the sciences, social sciences and humanities, supported by a grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. Six of the twelve theme-based clusters featured music and other arts disciplines. This paper will focus on one cluster in particular, Medicine and Culture (composed of music, medicine, American studies and literature) and explore the work and experiences of the music instructor, Dr. Patricia Repar, who helped to create this blended combination of disciplines. As a result of working with the teaching team in this cluster, including a Professor Emeritus of Family and Community Medicine, Dr. Repar started a new program called Arts in Medicine at UNM's Health Science Center.

Because the value of the arts has been increasingly marginalized in American society – evidence is that arts education has been taken out of public education in major cities and even the most established arts organizations are weathering serious financial struggles – it is critical to find vehicles to teach about arts and culture in new contexts.

Therefore although crossing disciplinary boundaries should be celebrated throughout the spectrum of knowledge, the inclusion of the arts in the pilot Hewlett program has had particular impact. An important lesson learned is that new faculty relationships

across disciplines can lead not only to excellent teaching and research models but also to institutional change.

**Title: The Hewlett Clusters at the University of New Mexico: an Interdisciplinary Curricular Model in Which Music and Other Arts Disciplines Have Been Integrated with the Humanities, Social Sciences and Sciences**

The philosophy that has framed the Hewlett clusters, an interdisciplinary pilot program in general education at the University of New Mexico, is eloquently articulated by Edward O. Wilson in his book *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge*: "...true reform will aim at the consilience of science with the social sciences and humanities in scholarship and teaching. Every college student should be able to answer the following question: What is the relation between science and the humanities and how is it important for human welfare?...Only fluency across the [disciplinary] boundaries will provide a clear view of the world as is really is..."<sup>1</sup> The challenges of linking seemingly disparate bodies of knowledge and social spheres was the focus of a meeting that took place in the mid-1990's between University of New Mexico officials and community members in a rural part of New Mexico. The subject was the quality of health care in the state, a challenge with which the community was asking the university for assistance. The small town where the event took place had neither a doctor nor satisfactory medical infrastructure. However, the university's School of Medicine had placed a resident there for several years on a fellowship. This era was now coming to an end. Community members were dismayed that the young doctor was leaving town. The residents wanted him to stay. The doctor explained: "How can I practice medicine in a place where my daughter cannot have violin lessons?" This story illustrates the significance of fluency across boundaries, which Wilson discusses in his book.

Guided by the belief that students need to learn about the integration of knowledge early in their university careers, the University of New Mexico applied for and received a grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation to develop an innovative approach towards the general education curriculum. The impetus for this

initiative is part of a broad American higher education trend to focus on the first year of college and best practices in teaching undergraduate students. A report from the Boyer Commission in the mid-1990's admonished American research universities for not giving undergraduate education sufficient attention. During the last 5-10 years, foundations such as the Hewlett have been providing incentives for institutional change. Specifically, the grant provided resources for a mandatory year of training for all 36 professors who taught in the program. Interdisciplinary theme-based clusters were created to include three integrated core areas taught by a team of professors.

From its inception, the Hewlett project attracted considerable interest among arts faculty. Out of twelve Hewlett clusters taught over two years, half of the clusters included an arts discipline within their theme-based structures.<sup>2</sup> The Hewlett clusters with an arts component were: Language, Performance and Identity in Nuevo Mexicano Culture (Theatre and Dance), Representations of the Psyche (Film/Media Arts), Bodies in Movement, Language in Space (Dance), Medicine and Culture (Music), Persuasion in Society: The Medium and the Message (Music), and Distant Cousins: The Reunion of Literature, Movement and Psychology (Dance). As noted by John Blacking in *How Musical is Man?* "Music is a synthesis of cognitive processes, which are present in culture and in the human body,"<sup>3</sup> Here, too, the arts served to synthesize concepts and ideas within the course clusters. Particular characteristics about the inclusion of arts disciplines in the Hewlett project will be illustrated by focusing on one interdisciplinary cluster, Medicine and Culture.

Medicine and Culture, taught in the fall of 2001, blended the areas of medicine, American Studies, English literature and music. One of the instructors, Dr. Patrice Repar, taught an introductory music appreciation course as a part of that cluster. Dr. Repar, a composer who has taught a course called *Enhancing Health through Creative Encounters* in the university's College of Fine Arts, has a particular interest in arts and medicine. In discussing the Hewlett project at a recent arts-in-medicine

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<sup>1</sup> Edmund O. Wilson *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge*, NY: Vintage Books, Random House, Inc., 1999, 13-14

<sup>2</sup> Appendix 1 lists the titles and short descriptions of the twelve Hewlett clusters offered at the University of New Mexico 2001-2003.

<sup>3</sup> John Blacking, *How Musical is Man?* Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2000, 89

conference, Dr. Repar reports: “The audience was very interested in an undergraduate course designed to explore the concept of “health” as a multi-dimensional and complex phenomenon...”<sup>4</sup> One of the most interesting outcomes of the Hewlett project is that Dr. Repar’s participation in the Medicine and Culture cluster helped to define a new role she would play at UNM – as founder of the Artists-in-Medicine program at the University of New Mexico Hospice. She discusses the preparation for teaching the cluster as well as her disappointment that the students seemed at times unappreciative about the opportunity they had to participate in the Hewlett program. Here are some of her reflections<sup>5</sup>:

1. Ben [a medical doctor and documentary filmmaker] and Peter [instructor of literature] and I spent almost a year preparing the course and over that time had many stimulating and imaginative conversations. We covered so much territory in our preparations I felt as if I was preparing not for a single course but for many. And given that a curriculum will hopefully begin in the not-too-distant future as part of the Arts-in-Medicine program I feel much better prepared to design it and teach it. Not only did I expand my notion of potential course content but I expanded my understanding of how it might be presented, i.e., the kinds of preparatory materials needed, the amount of time necessary for certain topics, etc.
2. It was mind-boggling to watch Ben actually teach a class in medicine to university freshmen. [This] inspired me to continue spreading the word--about the effectiveness of interdisciplinary learning and about the expanded notion of healthcare and taking personal responsibility for it.
3. Students' responses to the course were unexpected and lukewarm at best. This was upsetting after we had spent so much time in preparation and so many hours a week trying to wake up the class and bring the material to life. Nonetheless after a couple of years to reflect on the situation I think that the entire experience of interdisciplinary learning was so foreign to them that they were confused much of the time and missed the richness of

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<sup>4</sup> 2002 Conference Report submitted by Patrice Repar

the course content--much of which emphasized the connections among the disciplines. My guess is that most of the public (including educators) would have the same or similar responses to interdisciplinary endeavors of any kind. In the ER Waiting Room I have had overwhelmingly positive feedback from patients to the music and art we provide--but the odd time I have someone respond with anger and confusion about what we are doing there. Because of my Hewlett experience I better understand these negative responses--a very significant point of learning I might add.

4. The particular combination of medicine and the arts is a controversial one particularly given the healthcare crisis in the United States today. So this course was vulnerable in ways that I think others were not. We had several students with chronic illness take the course for instance, which provoked various kinds of consequences most of which did not enhance individual or group learning situations.
5. Some exciting projects grew out of my affiliation with Ben Daitz, M.D. He obtained funding both from the University Hospital and from New Mexico Arts (through my grant) to make a short documentary of the arts-in-medicine program which we plan to market internationally. He also plans to write an article for the New York Times on the program. This overwhelming support from Ben grew as he got to know me. One day as I was teaching a class on the fundamental elements of music the students were tired, crabby and unresponsive. So I pulled out every trick in the book and made the class entirely participatory and the energy began to move. By the end of it I had lost 5 pounds but everybody was AWAKE!!!! Ever since that day Ben looked at me differently. He saw my passion alive in performance and he knew I could make things happen--not just in university curriculum but in personal transformation--via the creative process, the healing process. I am delighted that he is making the video and writing the article but more importantly his support has given me deep confidence in what I do at the hospital. And as I gain more confidence in

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<sup>5</sup>These reflections are from a 29 March 2003 e-mail from Patrice Repar to Nancy Uscher

the work so do the medical professionals and the patients!!!! So his support has been invaluable.

6. Finally I must say that the Hewlett Cluster helped me to constructively struggle with my two lives--one in the computer lab in the basement of the music building and one in the university hospital--a technology/humanities push and pull in my daily life. The Hewlett experience deepened my sense of how I could integrate my interests and talents--further the process of creating balance and wholeness in my own life. And thus the piece  
1. .breathing.bones.mobile.mind.was born for tape and tenor trombone.

There is a further outcome from the Hewlett cluster Medicine and Culture. A graduate student at the university, Melissa Bruce, began to work with Dr. Repar. Ms. Bruce has undertaken a pilot qualitative research case study with a hospice patient. As part of the study, she observed ways in which artistic and creative processes support this patient's well being and search for meaning in her life and death. The research also included the development of a theoretical framework, which will be used in this student's dissertation.

An important reason for offering arts courses within a new curricular framework is to express their critical collective voice within in the broad spectrum of knowledge and ways of understanding the world. Because the value of the arts has been increasingly marginalized in American society – evidence is that arts education has been taken out of public school curricula in major cities and even the most established arts organizations are weathering serious financial struggles – it is critical to find vehicles to teach about arts and culture in compelling higher education contexts. Although crossing disciplinary boundaries should be celebrated throughout the spectrum of knowledge, the inclusion of the arts in the pilot Hewlett program has had particular impact and meaning. John Blacking states: "...the performing arts are important means of reflection, of sensing order and ordering experience, and relating inner sensations to the life of feeling of one's society." <sup>6</sup>

In conclusion, the University of New Mexico has gleaned important lessons from the Hewlett cluster project. Through curricular innovation, new interdisciplinary collegial relationships developed that went beyond the intentions of the original project. This outcome is documented above in the Medicine and Culture cluster. Additionally, a strategic faculty partnership developed between Dorothy Baca, Professor in the Department of Theater and Dance and Enrique Lamadrid, Professor of Spanish and Portuguese, both of whom taught in the cluster Language, Performance and Identity in Nuevo Mexicano Culture. Dr. Lamadrid, who is now closely affiliated with the Department of Theater and Dance, has helped bring and promote the performances of indigenous Hispanic plays and has brought in local communities to work with students in the new productions that have been mounted.

These examples have taught the university that new faculty collaborations across disciplines result not only in excellent teaching and research, but also in certain instances, institutional change. A pilot project like the Hewlett can strongly influence the academic culture in which it takes place. During the years of this curricular experiment, freshman learning communities began at UNM, also using the approach of theme-based linked classes across disciplines. Additionally, as a result of the mandatory training for all participating faculty, teaching strategies to encourage student engagement and active learning were discussed and utilized more broadly throughout the campus. Responses from Hewlett students were varied, but many of them expressed great satisfaction with the program. International experiential learning was a successful dimension of the Hewlett program in the spring 2003 Mar de Cortez cluster. Students in this cluster felt the experience of the trip to Mexico had a profound effect on their learning. Integration of disciplines became more normative in the culture – and this kind of interdisciplinary coherence may well help define areas of distinction in the university's strategic plan. The Hewlett clusters attempted to provide students with a glimpse at what might be labeled life literacy – an approach to education that blurs the boundaries among disciplines and acknowledges both the diversity and complexity that is part of the global society. The new literacy, congruent with Edmund Wilson's *Consilience*, teaches students that the creation of

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<sup>6</sup> John Blacking, *Music, Culture & Experience: Selected Papers of John Blacking* Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995, 176

knowledge across disciplines can be put to use to solve society's most daunting challenges.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### ***TWELVE HEWLETT INTERDISCIPLINARY CLUSTERS OFFERED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO 2001-2003***

**Fall 2001**

#### ***Language, Performance and Identity in Nuevo Mexicano Culture***

Dorothy Baca, Dept. of Theater and Dance

Eduardo Hernandez Chavez, Dept. of Linguistics

Enrique Lamadrid, Dept. of Spanish and Portuguese

The complexities of Hispano cultural identity are articulated in language, celebrated in folkways, and performed in expressive culture. Thus, the common thread that unites this cluster is language and the dynamics of bilingualism in an intercultural social reality. The three core courses that will form the cluster are Theater 122: Theater Appreciation, Spanish 201: Intermediate Spanish for Bilinguals and Linguistics 101: Introduction to the Study of Language. The three instructors will use both Spanish and English as media of instruction, strengthening the language-culture relationship.

#### ***The Family as a Complex System in Life and in Literature***

Allen Parkman, Anderson School of Management (Economics)

Susanne Backmann, Dept. of Foreign Languages and Literatures

Jan Schuetz, Dept. of Communication and Journalism

Understanding the family involves recognizing it as a complex economic decision-making system, a community that inherits values and traditions from culture and a group of people who needs to understand and resolve communication problems. By



focusing on the family system, the cluster instructors will bring together the content and skills that the students are expected to learn from the core classes of Economics 106, Modern Language 101 and Communications and Journalism 130. Students will learn principles and methods for analyzing family economic issues, explore the genre and development of the fairy tale and learn principles of public speaking, family communication and family mediation.

### ***Medicine and Culture***

Ben Daitz, School of Medicine

Peter White, Dept. of English

Patrice Repar, Dept. of Music

This cluster explores the nature of medicine and healing from anthropological, literary and musical perspectives. Included in the syllabus will be medical and healing practices of diverse cultures, the use of the arts in healing for both patients and caregivers, and illness, medicine and healing as they relate to particular stages of the life cycle. Mythic, folkloric, and literary texts as well as music from various cultures around the world will be examined in the course of these discussions. Core courses included are Music Appreciation 139, English 150 and a social/behavioral sciences core course.

### **Spring 2002**

### ***Representations of the Psyche***

James Jenson, School of Medicine, Psychiatry (Psychology)

G.F. Schueler, Dept. of Philosophy

Ira Jaffe, Dept. of Media Arts

This cluster proposes to address conceptions of human thought and emotion, the self and personality from the perspectives of Philosophy, Media Arts and Psychology. The

unfolding of these constructs within individual development and their changing representations through history will serve as complimentary contexts for the exploration of this important topic. The cluster will bring together core courses Psychology 105, Philosophy 101 and Media Arts 210 under this theme.

***Bodies in Movement, Language in Space***

Judith Bennahum, Dept. of Theater and Dance

Carolyn Woodward, Dept. of English

Walter Putnam, Dept. of Foreign Languages and Literatures

This cluster will examine the evolving cultural significance of the body, especially in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century France and England. The instructors will link dance, literature and language by exploring their historical and cultural importance. Through this interdisciplinary work, students will learn that our contemporary ideas of physical space and corporeal presence have a history that includes language, movement, imaginative writing and dress. The courses Dance 105, English 150 and first year French will be linked in this cluster.

***Persuasion in Society: The Medium and the Message***

Charles Paine, Dept. of English

Karl Hinterbichler, Dept. of Music

Sherman Wilcox, Dept. of Linguistics

This topic will introduce students to the ways that academics and others have examined culture and knowledge during the latter part of the twentieth century—for instance, the idea that all human discourse and activity can be seen as persuasive, as having designs on us. The so-called “cynical-hip” generation has been reared on popular postmodernism and the potential cynicism it can foster, but few of our students have the critical tools they need for turning this cynicism into social action, or even social savvy. We plan for these linked courses (Music Appreciation 140, English 102, Composition II: Analysis and Argument, and Linguistics 101: Introduction to the Study of Language) to help our students to think differently about

their society and their place in it, as well as foster a permanent curiosity about ideas and culture.

**Fall 2002**

***Darwin's Legacy: The Culture and Science of Evolutionary Theory***

Vera Norwood - American Studies

Jeff Froelich - Anthropology

Gary Harrison - Literature

In this cluster the scientific, social and cultural impact of the concept and theories of evolution, particularly in the aftermath of Darwin's groundbreaking *The Origin of Species* (1859). Darwin's theories of evolved species and competition influenced subsequent thinking in science, the social sciences, and the humanities, and left a legacy of controversy that continues today. Students will gain an understanding of current theories of human evolution, a balanced perspective on the creationist opposition to them, and an appreciation for the way Darwin's ideas still reverberate throughout the sciences, social sciences, literature and culture.

***Technology and Social Change***

Paul Nathanson - Political Science

Everett Rogers - Communication and Journalism

William Gross - Physics

These three courses deal with the impact of new technologies on social changes, as well as the emergence of new technologies due to social changes. We will focus on past illustrations and future projections that are likely to impact students' lives. The main objectives of this cluster are (1) to provide students with knowledge about six important technology cores that have been, and are, associated with crucial social changes in society, (2) to prepare students to understand the processes through which emerging technologies have brought about social changes, and (3) to utilize the emphasis on technology and social change to help students understand and apply the

content of these courses. Each technological change will be viewed from its scientific, public policy, engineering and communications dimensions.

### ***Trail of Time***

Laura Crossey/Karl Karlstrom - Earth & Planetary Science

Chip Wills - Anthropology

Virginia Scharff - History

Framing our worldview according to different time scales yields different understandings, even of the same place. Time is the underlying concept for this cluster of courses, with three scales represented: geological (billion to thousand year scale), human (thousand to hundred year scale), and historical (hundred year to minute). We will develop a time line for understanding the geologic, archaeologic, and scientific/cultural history of New Mexico and the Southwest. We plan to use the spectacular geologic, historical and cultural setting of New Mexico and the southwestern United States as a common thread cluster. Our goal is to enliven these introductory courses focusing on examples, problems, and readings from the southwestern U.S. Field trips to nearby geological, historical, and cultural highlights include Grand Canyon, El Moro and Chaco Canyon.

### **Spring 2003**

#### ***Mar de Cortez: The Natural and Cultural History of Baja California:***

Maria Dolores Gonzales - Spanish Language

Enrique Lamadrid - American Studies

Michael Thomas – Anthropology

In the geographical imagination of the seventeenth century Spanish Mexicans, the Sea of Cortez was New Mexico's link to the high seas. Period maps erroneously showed the Rio Grande flowing into its waters just across the gulf from Loreto, the first Spanish settlement on what was believed by cartographers and explorers to be the

Island of California. This cluster will explore the unnatural and cultural history of a bioregion distinctly different from the watershed of the Rio Grande/Bravo, yet connected to it through a common language, culture, and history. A nine-day spring break expedition will retrace the sea route of explorers, naturalists, missionaries and privateers from La Paz to Loreto. Ports of call include the Universidad de Baja California Sur, museums, marine preserves and research centers, desert islands and Jesuit missions.

***Distant Cousins: The Reunion of Literature, Movement and Psychology***

Jennifer Predock-Linnell - Dance

Sam Roll - Psychology

Hector Torres – Literature

It is almost impossible to conceive of the emergence of culture without storytelling, coordinated group and individual movement, and attempts to explain the vicissitudes of human motivation. It is the purpose of this sequence of courses to alert the participants to ways in which literature, dance and motivational psychology are like distant cousins who speak different languages and cannot communicate to each other their struggles, discoveries and triumphs. Each must respond to and coordinate the experiences, which are rooted in our biological, physical inheritance including our instincts and physical urges.

***Genes, Peoples and Languages: Biological, Cultural and Linguistic Diversity***

Alan Hudson - Linguistics

Jim Boone - Anthropology

Scott Altenbach - Biology

This cluster deals with the great diversity of forms of life, forms of human culture and forms of speech found in the world today, and with the principles according to which this diversity has come into existence in the first place. But in addition to discussing diversity, the three courses will also deal with what is common to all the various forms of life, the various forms of culture and the various languages around the globe,

and will discuss the question of how diversity should be evaluated against the backdrop of commonality. The three courses, taken as a group, will also illustrate how similar principles of evolution apply to the emergence of biological cultural and linguistic diversity: variation, natural and/or social selection, isolation and the passage of time. In today's world it is important to recognize both the difference and sameness between people as realities and to know how to assign significance to one in the context of the other.