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No Abstract

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Relying on the Kindness of Strangers: CEDD's Report on Hiring, Tenure, Promotion in IDS

Richard Carp

The status of interdisciplinary studies in American institutions of higher education is a paradox. On the one hand, the rhetoric of interdisciplinarity is ubiquitous (Henry 2005, Trower 2008, Kleinberg 2008). On the other hand, many of the longest standing and most highly regarded undergraduate interdisciplinary unit are experiencing "reduced budgets . . . dispersal of their programs . . . absorption into existing honors college programs . . . potential closure . . . (and) total elimination" (Henry 2005). To the extent that interdisciplinary programs are thriving, it may be at the price of a "Faustian bargain" with the new "university-as-service-industry," becoming niche markets "not substantially different from the academic disciplines, departments, and divisions they were originally designed to challenge" (Kleinberg 2008 6). The success of interdisciplinarity and "the end of real interdisciplinarity" would be indistinguishable (6). In this unsettled and unsettling context, questions of hiring, promotion, and tenure of interdisciplinarians assume a high priority, since tenure provides the closest thing to job security

available in the academy (Augsburg 2006 151 and note 1 157), and tenure is the coin of the academic realm, signaling institutional commitment and collegial status.

One can only welcome, then, the 2007 report by the Council of Environmental Deans and Directors, “Interdisciplinary Hiring, Tenure and Promotion: Guidance for Individuals and Institutions” (henceforth “Guidance”, Pfirman, et. al 2007). Based on earlier work by one of the authors and three other collaborators reported in the Chronicle of Higher Education in 2005 (Pfirman, et al.), “Guidance,” claims to present “the first comprehensive approach that deals with the entire pre- and post-tenure experience.” It offers “guidance . . . targeted towards both individuals and academic administrators with the goal of facilitating the development and advancement of interdisciplinary scholars” (hereafter IDS, 1). “Guidance” self-consciously conflates inter-, multi-, and transdisciplinarity, “scholarship that does not fit within disciplinary structures” (6). It is intended to serve not only environmental sciences/studies, but also what they call “other interdisciplinary fields – for example, women’s and urban studies.” “Guidance” does not consider programs that promote interdisciplinarity *per se*, and may therefore be more useful to those in inter- or pseudo-disciplines, though it is neither sufficient nor useless in either case.

“Guidance” is a well-considered, well-researched document with good intentions toward interdisciplinary scholars, and it contains valuable good advice. A seasoned faculty member will at once have noticed, however, that the two groups at which it is aimed (“individuals and academic administrators”) do not include that most powerful third group, peer academics – most often senior peers, who play the most consequential role in faculty personnel processes. Cathy Trower, Research Associate at Harvard’s Collaborative on Careers in Higher Education, recently likened interdisciplinary faculty seeking tenure to Alice in her adventures underground (2008).

Although Trower's Alice fails to get tenure, Lewis Carroll's awakens from her dream none the worse for wear. A better literary analogy is Blanche DuBois in Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire*, for interdisciplinary scholars must rely on the kindness of strangers, symbolized in the first instance by those senior peers strangely absent from the intended audience of "Guidance." Readers may recall Blanche was eventually raped by her sister Stella's husband and driven mad by Stella's inability to accept Blanche's account of the rape (1947).

What is in "Guidance" (with light editorial commentary)

"Guidance" divides the academic career into six stages from defining the position to senior faculty status, each with a corresponding section in the report. In addition, "Guidance" contains an "Executive Summary," "Readings," "Resources and Sample Language," and four appendices.

Stage one, "structural considerations," begins with the admonition that "the first stage . . . should occur before the scholar is hired." (1) After commenting that "promoting interdisciplinary work requires consideration of disciplinary and departmental structures and cultures," "Guidance" states that disciplinary-based procedures and criteria for tenure and promotion are "manifestly inequitable" when applied to interdisciplinary scholarship (6). Commendably, "Guidance" advises institutions to be self-conscious and proactive, addressing six questions before drafting a search protocol or job description: long-term resource commitment; appropriate expectations for IDS, e.g., including scholarship of integration, application, and teaching, as well as discovery (cf. Boyer 1990); analyzing promotion and tenure at all levels for impediments; exploring applicability of research indicating favoring disciplinary research may negatively affect workforce diversity (e.g., Rhoten and Pfirman 2007); establishing

high-level structures to “oversee and champion interdisciplinary activities;” and showcasing interdisciplinary accomplishments to the campus community (7). These steps can work to clarify the institutional context in which an interdisciplinary hire will take place, and, to some extent, ameliorate aspects within it detrimental to the success of IDS. However none of these recommendations transforms Blanche’s fundamental situation: they can be implemented by fiat of upper administrators, and they can be reversed by that same fiat. In the long run, IDS remain dependent on the kindness of strangers.

The second stage is establishing the position. There are two primary recommendations. First, involve as early as possible those institutional components that will be crucial to the ongoing success of the person hired. These components may include “disciplinary faculty, interdisciplinary faculty and research scientists, senior academic administrators, and representatives of promotion and tenure committees [along with] institutes of centers devoted to fostering interdisciplinary activities” (10) Second, draft a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) “that actually articulates expectations about scholarship, teaching, budget, space and departmental and community participation” (10).

“Guidance” is especially concerned that tenure and promotion criteria be clearly articulated (Appendix I is a sample MOU). “Guidance” anticipates several well-known obstacles to successful interdisciplinary hires, focusing on the complexity of joint hires and indicating the frequent difficulty of joint appointments at the junior level. The University of Southern California Joint Appointment Checklist is Appendix III. The authors recommend that joint appointments at the junior level be 60-70% in one “home” department and that service and budgetary issues be specified in the MOU. The USC document stipulates that the primary department handles tenure, promotion, and merit “by regular procedures followed within that

unit” (28-29). “Guidance” advises that advertising copy clearly articulate the institutional home and all requirements (11). The primary suggestion for fostering institutional acceptance is to develop and search simultaneously for a cluster of several positions in support of an interdisciplinary focus, with search committees constituted from multiple possible home departments. The recommended candidate for each position would negotiate with their home department. The hope is to “set the stage for broad scale acceptance of the concept, and the notion that the success of the initiative or cluster is the objective, rather than the success of an individual department” (11).

In their discussion of stage two, the authors correctly identify many of the obstacles to success for interdisciplinary hires that emerge during the process of position definition and search. Simply put these are: who is the boss; what are the criteria of success and who applies them; when and to whom can Blanche say “no”; and who provides the resources and on what terms. The key recommendation is the MOU, and it is undoubtedly a good idea, for it is intended to answer to these questions. The answers provided, though, are less than satisfactory. In Appendix III the boss is a disciplinary home department (with bigger bosses up the line – Dean, Provost), Blanche can say “no” to the secondary department sometimes (but it provides input on key personnel matters, so “no” may be risky), and the home department provides the resources supported by the Dean. A key innovation is for the MOU to specify criteria for tenure and promotion, but when push comes to shove, can this agreement be made to stick? Can a department and/or Dean or Provost be forced to accept a tenure or promotion based on these criteria? I am afraid the answer is a clear “no.” Courts have been loathe to address the application of criteria, except when discrimination against a protected class is alleged. In general courts have restricted themselves to deciding whether or not colleges and universities

have followed their established procedures, leaving criteria and their application to locally empowered academic bodies (IceMiller, LLP, Oct, 7, 2008; *Claggett vs. Wake Forest University*, (NC Court of Appeals 1997)). Under these circumstances, the MOU is best described in the same language “Guidance” uses for cluster hires. It is a “strategy. . . to set the stage . . . for acceptance,” but there is no guarantee it will be effective or, if it is, for how long.

Phase two of “Guidance” can help an institution become aware of internal obstacles to success and provide interested and supportive parties useful methods for overcoming them. Where there is general institutional commitment to an interdisciplinary hire, “Guidance” can help supporters overcome resistance, and to this extent it is genuinely helpful. However, “general institutional commitment” remains necessary, and Blanche remains dependent on the kindness of strangers. These strangers are not just academic others – faculty members, deans, provosts – who are unfamiliar with interdisciplinarity in general and with the particular interdisciplinary nexus of the scholar – but in all probability literal strangers as well. The average tenure of Deans and Provosts is about five years, while the tenure clock runs for six; departmental faculties change over time and personnel committees vary from year to year. The odds are that the people who will ultimately decide promotion and tenure were not involved in the hiring process, may well not have been at the institution at the time of hire, and are likely to have their own agendas. As we will see below, the history of interdisciplinarity suggests that establishing independent interdisciplinary units also may not guarantee long-term security.

Stage three is search and hiring. The main recommendation is to further specify the details of the MOU. “Guidance” advises that the search committee be interdisciplinary and multi-departmental, reflecting the nature of the person sought and possible institutional homes for the position. Because this will result in a committee whose members who are not

accustomed to working together, and who may not understand key differences between their home disciplines or between those disciplines and the interdisciplinary nexus for which they are searching, “Guidance” suggests educating search committee members about some key differences between interdisciplinary and disciplinary searches. For example, since advertising for and meeting with candidates will need to take place in multiple disciplinary locations, the search may require more resources than disciplinary searches. The committee may need to interview more candidates, who may need more time on campus to talk with more departments and people. Since different disciplines hire at different times, the committee may need to start sooner and work more quickly than some of its members are accustomed to, and in some cases search committees or representative members may need to meet candidates at national meetings they would not otherwise attend. Moreover, presentation protocols differ across disciplines.

Regarding the MOU, “Guidance” recommends the committee begin to fill in the blanks left in stage two, spelling out “issues such as research, teaching, service, and mentoring obligations for all departments” (12). Where there will be multiple constituencies, voting responsibility should be specified, and department chairs should be helped to understand that “what works within the discipline, for example, a reliance on informal mentoring, may not work for those who are bridging disciplines and departments” (12). Getting to the heart of the matter, “Guidance” goes on to suggest the MOU specify “departmental representation on review committees, including the tenure process, as well as the criteria . . . and the terms and conditions for success . . . (including) the balance of disciplinary and interdisciplinary research and publication . . . and criteria for judging the acceptability of (interdisciplinary) journals” (12-13). In the context of a supportive institutional environment where success of the appointment is desired, such an MOU will go far to assure the requisite balance of rigor and fairness that is

necessary for all academic personnel evaluations. That is, so long as the strangers are kind, the MOU will help them do their jobs well, and this is a significant advance.

Stage four is development, mentoring and protection of junior scholars. Strangely, the mood of “Guidance” becomes increasingly subjunctive at this point. While in stages two and three the MOU was supposed to specify and articulate in writing, in stage four there is a clear recognition that it may not have done so. For example, “junior interdisciplinary scholars housed in a disciplinary department are often caught between . . . promotion and tenure processes that require demonstration of sufficiently high levels of productivity . . . in the discipline (and) the desire to devote considerable energy and resources . . . on interdisciplinary work . . . distant from the home discipline” (15). If the MOU had successfully and enforceably established the mix of disciplinary and interdisciplinary work and the appropriate venues for each, this would no longer be an issue in stage four. We would simply advise the junior faculty member “be sure you satisfy the criteria and publish in the venues established in the MOU.” Yet “Guidance” correctly recognizes the *realpolitik* of this most vulnerable stage of the personnel process, and the MOU is never mentioned.

In order to successfully navigate this stage, employees (for this is what they are, now), require help from others they cannot compel. For example, in collaborative work, junior scholars “need to make clear their unique contributions” to satisfy evaluative concerns about their originality and productivity, by publishing “some of the research as a senior author.” “Senior PI’s” of these projects “should be advised to make sure that junior researchers have this opportunity . . . (and) should clarify the role of their junior colleagues (in) letters of support” (15).

The discussion of stage four correctly identifies many obstacles. Interdisciplinary work is often collaborative and may require time intensive and difficult networking, often at multiple institutions requiring expensive and time consuming travel. In many arenas, interdisciplinary work is often “applied,” rather than “pure,” and involves “unusual stakeholders, outside the academy” (14). Because of the intrinsic difficulties of integrating disparate fields, whether collaboratively or individually, and the relative paucity of funding for interdisciplinary work, “interdisciplinary research projects frequently take a long time to get established and produce results” (15). Moreover, the more radically interdisciplinary the project, the more daunting its prospects: “research that cuts across biophysical and social sciences can be difficult to publish in widely recognized journals,” (15) while those publication opportunities that do exist are likely not to be indexed in Web of Science, making them more difficult for other scholars to find and less likely to be cited.

“Guidance” points out ways to help. Junior scholars can be supported to bring visiting interdisciplinary scholars to campus, educating other faculty members on the larger field in which the scholar’s work inheres and bringing a possible mentor to campus. Interdisciplinary teaching “should be explicitly supported” and departments “should” recognize the difficulties involved in developing new courses for which there are no textbooks, for team teaching, and for other costs of interdisciplinary teaching. “Guidance” recommends a senior mentor with experience in interdisciplinary research, while warning of the need for clarity about the role, if any, of the mentor in evaluation. More strangers (senior PI’s, senior mentors, collaborators in other disciplines and institutions)! More kindnesses needed (you have to understand how hard this is, how different from disciplinary work, how slow to develop, how hard to fund)! Poor Blanche.

With stage five, we arrive at formal and consequential personnel evaluations and preparing the dossier to be used in them. This section builds on what has come before, remaining in the subjunctive mood. At this point, it's pretty much up to Blanche; the advice might be called "how to get strangers to be kind." Once more the MOU makes no appearance, despite its featured role in stages one, two, and three, except to be sent to external reviewers at the time of evaluation. Three primary arenas are identified: creating the dossier, addressing evaluation criteria, and forming and educating the review committee and external references. Again the advice is helpful if Blanche is indeed among kind strangers. The dossier should be annotated to make clear to its readers the significance of various pieces of work (Appendix II provides a helpful annotation guide.) Faculty colleagues and administrators should be informed in advance that reviews of interdisciplinarians customarily raise questions that do not arise in disciplinary reviews: when those questions occur they "do not reflect any potential deficiencies of the individual candidate" (18). Noting that interdisciplinarians tend toward scholarship of "integration," "application," and "teaching" as well as discovery (Boyer, 1990) and restating the aforementioned conditions that may restrict publication of even the finest interdisciplinary work, they urge reviewers "to shift the emphasis . . . towards intellectual achievement and leadership, rather than traditional metrics" (19).

Review committees "should be" interdisciplinary or at least multi-departmental, should include at least one senior interdisciplinarian familiar with Blanche's work, or at least an interdisciplinarian in another field; ideally it would be continuous with the search committee. The review committee should "bring in an external reviewer who is familiar with the state of the interdisciplinary field and the candidate's scholarship," or, barring that, "call outside scholars to get their feedback informally" (19) External reviews should be sought from interdisciplinarians

in the field and “eminent disciplinary scholars” competent to address the research (19). The MOU should be sent to the external reviewers, who should be asked to “comment on interdisciplinary contributions and impact” (20).

Stage six addresses senior career development in five points and three policy recommendations. First, they note that senior scholars who move toward interdisciplinarity in mid-career, often after achieving tenure face the same difficulties as junior IDS, difficulties which “must be addressed through improved assessment and reward policies for all scholars” (21). Second, they identify career-long IDS, who need “appropriate assessment during annual reviews and post-tenure review . . . that account for the special qualities of interdisciplinary activities” (21). “Guidance” recommends supportive mid-career steps for senior IDS who “become stale and lose momentum with age,” including what they call, without elaboration, “cross-fertilization of ideas” (21). Third, they remark that many senior IDS come to the academy from non-academic venues, and that it is necessary to recognize and reward non-academic aspects of their portfolios, particularly when they have affected major policy actions or had “substantial societal impact” (21). Finally they observe that some senior scholars are appropriate to leader interdisciplinary programs and that, like other senior scholars, they may require training in and support for leadership activities. They exhort upper administration to “be attuned to the atypical complexities of administering an interdisciplinary faculty, program, and infrastructure,” which they identify as “high networking time and costs and lack of recognition,” tendency to do more committee and advising work compared to disciplinary peers, “difficulty obtaining awards and salary increases compared to disciplinary scholars,” and “tendency to receive fewer outside offers” (22). Policy recommendations are to give “full credit” for interdisciplinary work (such as professional development, multiple PI grants and multiple author

publications, fundraising entrepreneurship, mentoring junior IDS and students, service, and abnormal publication patterns), to establish “special awards and resources that reward interdisciplinary activities. By the time Blanche reaches middle age her charms have faded, though she may have acquired the wisdom of experience; she must hope those around her appreciate her enough to be kind.

Appreciative Critique

There is much to like about “Guidance.” Above all it collects in one place considerations of the life-cycle of an interdisciplinary academic position, articulates obstacles to the success of IDS at each stage, and posits responses to overcome those obstacles. In situations where many institutional players genuinely seek the successful appointment of IDS but others do not, or in situations where all institutional players are supportive but are ignorant of the difficulties, “Guidance” is likely to be quite helpful. That it does not tell Blanche how to do without the kindness of strangers can hardly be held against it, for it seems there is no other way. The contemporary academy is characterized by disciplinarity, not simply as an organization of knowledge, but much more powerfully as “*political institutions* that demarcate areas of academic territory, allocate privilege and responsibilities of expertise, and structure claims on resources” (Lenoir 1993 82 italics original). As an interrelated set of political actors, disciplines produce what Ager (1991) calls “disciplinary hegemony” which powerfully resists developments that unsettle the primacy and authority of disciplines, even when this requires co-opting components of interdisciplinarity up to and including the label “interdisciplinarity” (Henry 2005 17-27). However the usefulness of “Guidance” to individuals is weakened by its disregard of these facts.

With high institutional goodwill, such individuals are likely to succeed with or without this text; without such goodwill, it provides few effective means to prosper.

“Guidance” also suffers from two weaknesses: unsupported claims and a certain subdued whininess, and the two are related. “Guidance” frequently asserts the special difficulty of interdisciplinary work: it takes more time, is harder to fund, creates extra teaching demands; networking requirements create extra costs; it is slower to produce results; and so forth. Each claim is plausible and is often supported in the text by plausibility arguments, but nowhere are data provided. There are even charts, e.g., “Table 2: Promise and Perils of Interdisciplinary Scholarship,” placing “early attraction” side by side with “later difficulties,” but no studies are cited as documentation.

This goes hand in glove with the sly whininess. On nearly every page we are told that interdisciplinarity is harder than disciplinarity (intrinsically, not because of irrational impediments), so interdisciplinary scholars need a break. Perhaps interdisciplinary work is more difficult, perhaps not – it’s no picnic being in a discipline, either. After twenty-four years of academic administration, some in disciplinary and some in interdisciplinary contexts, it seems to me that every segment of the academy believes that their work is the most difficult and time consuming, and that others just don’t understand. And after being responsible to evaluate work from agroecology to fine art, from education to history, from theory to community-based activism, I am convinced that most scholars in the academy work pretty darned hard, and we’d all be better off appreciating the efforts of others, rather than complaining that we are uniquely overworked and misunderstood.

In this respect I have to agree with Augsberg (2006) who basically says, “if you want to thrive in your institution, figure out how it evaluates faculty and meet the criteria.” For example,

“Guidance” recommends the MOU specify teaching obligations so an interdisciplinarian need not teach “department introductory courses for which (s)he is unprepared to teach” (11).

Introductory courses are likely to be part of what faculty consider to be the “drudge” of their jobs. For a new interdisciplinary hire to claim exemption from this work, especially by acknowledging inability to teach an introductory course in the home department’s discipline, is likely to engender damaging ill will. Junior faculty members, disciplinary or interdisciplinary, must figure out how they can make key contributions to their home units in terms the units value: sharing unpopular or difficult teaching obligations, bringing in external funds, publishing in respected venues, pleasing the Dean, and so forth.

There are some opportunity costs in being able to do interdisciplinary work in the academy, and scholars are well advised to be aware of them and prepared to undertake them, rather than complain about them. In my own career, I have taken care to participate in disciplinary, as well as interdisciplinary professional organizations and to publish in more than one disciplinary context (in my case art and religion) as well as in interdisciplinary venues. As an administrative and faculty mentor I have advised junior colleagues to do likewise. This means spending extra time and money to participate in meetings without reimbursement from the institution, and it means finding ways to cast one’s work within relevant disciplinary frameworks, sometimes at the expense of more radically interdisciplinary work. But when evaluation time rolls around, evident standing in multiple disciplines gives warrant to claims about the rigor of interdisciplinary work.

Further Reflections

In 2005, Klein posited “adequate economic and symbolic capital,” “full-time appointments in an interdisciplinary (unit),” “a secure location in the organizational hierarchy of the campus,” and “control of staffing” as necessary to sustain substantive interdisciplinary work (78). This institutional normalization at the institutional level roughly corresponds to Repko’s recommendations for “disciplining interdisciplinarity” through textbooks and other means at the pedagogical level (2006). At the 2003 AIS Annual Conference, I worried that seeking and obtaining these institutional goods would amount to Kleinberg’s (2008) “Faustian bargain,” in which “interdisciplinarity” becomes one among other practices enmeshed in the academy and gains institutional support, gathering control over resources such as space, tenure lines, operating budgets, and status by joining the disciplinary hegemony but losing its value as something other than disciplinary.

Developments since 2003 have raise other concerns, simply about the effectiveness of these normalization operations. Recent years have shown devastating losses to long established and well-reputed programs that seemed to have achieved all of Klein’s benchmarks, including the soon to be defunct Department of Interdisciplinary Studies at Appalachian State University, where I have been chair for nine years, which has lost control of tenure (dispersed to disciplinary departments) and become a program. Similarly damaging fates have come to units at George Mason, Alabama-Tuscaloosa, Wayne State, Miami University of Ohio, Arizona International, and San Francisco State. It seems increasingly likely that normalization can only take place in the presence of what I have called “kind strangers,” and that new strangers, or circumstances that try the kindness of old ones, is sufficient to eliminate Klein’s benchmarks of success. At Appalachian, we made use of the whole panoply of discipline-like normalized forms developed through AIS and elsewhere and recommended by Szostak, Repko, Augsburg, and others**:

professional association; journal; assessment protocols; textbooks. They were useless, and my impression is they were equally so at other institutions. Our upper administrators' responses were alternately, "So what," and "I don't care." We are all, truly Blanche DuBois.

At our most recent conference in 2007 my thoughts had developed, partly in the light of these profound losses to the field. We have suffered these losses, I proposed, not simply because interdisciplinarians have not yet won the battle of normalization. Interdisciplinarity viewed broadly is a conundrum which does not fit into the department and college structure that organizes knowledge production on campus.

Interdisciplinarity is as old as disciplinarity, yet interdisciplinarity has been persistently institutionally ephemeral. This is, at least in part, because interdisciplinarity *per se* has no object. The conceit of disciplines is that they study some *thing*: matter in its chemical interactions (Chemistry); people insofar as they are mental (Psychology); how to present products so people will buy them (Marketing). Interdisciplinarity *per se* studies no thing in particular, although each interdisciplinarian or interdisciplinary team studies something. Interdisciplinarity involves an always developing ensemble of practices for marshalling and integrating knowledge from multiple sources on behalf of a complex and evolving understanding of the world. It insists on the transdisciplinarity of the world, which, as we live in it, requires such an ensemble of practices.

The unease expressed in "Guidance" about IDS in Environmental Studies should alert us that things may not be so different among the "inter (or pseudo) disciplines," such as Women's Studies, Sustainable Development, Urban Studies, or Environmental Science. Augsburg suggests we "look at other successful longstanding interdisciplinary programs such as women's studies" because "they at least usually offer tenure-lines to their faculty" (2006 154). However,

Women's Studies persists largely because of political factors few other units can muster (not even Black/African/Africana Studies, or Latino/Chicano Studies).

Moreover, the normalization of Women's Studies has come at the cost of intelligibility and relevance to women outside academe that some lament (Messer-Davidow 2002). Messer-Davidow recounts how the "object" of Women's Studies ("woman") has itself been transformed as the result and condition of successful normalization. Unsettling knowledge objects is one of the services that open (or labile) interdisciplinarity provides knowledge production. For "environmental sciences/studies," for example, the object "environment," with its center/periphery structure, may reproduce causes of the ecological damage it attempts to remedy. This unsettling of the object of knowledge is one virtue of an alternative view of interdisciplinarity I discussed in 2003, what I called "insurgent" interdisciplinarity, engaged in processes by which unsettle and destabilize those practices and also, therefore, the resources deployed for the production of knowledge (see Henry 2005 20-27).

In any case, in the light of current disruptions of long-standing interdisciplinary programs, and "Guidance's" continued reliance on the kindness of strangers, even apparently established interdisciplinary programs should anticipate periodic disruptions. These may necessitate periodic use of insurgent processes, even for those who prefer a normalizing practice. Anticipating disruption, we might think of the virtues of dispersed (or guerilla) organizational models, whose weaknesses we know only too well. Unlike Szostak, I recommend seeking tenure in disciplinary departments, so scholars cannot be dismissed simply because their tenure-holding unit was disbanded. Understanding that we are "hard to digest" for the academy, we should use whatever resources we are can get without identifying success with particular resources, any of which can be lost to unkind strangers.

We shouldn't worry overly, though, about the resilience of interdisciplinarity. Like many insurgent phenomena (weeds for example), it is irrepressible, for at least three reasons. First, disciplinary knowledge cries out for integration; powerful as they are, the disciplines lack of "the pattern that connects" (Bateson 19) gives rise to interdisciplinary practices. Second, scholars pursue questions, not disciplines, following those questions even when they lead to new, unfamiliar knowledge needs begetting interdisciplinarity. Third, the world is in fact transdisciplinary, compelling us to "marshal and integrate knowledge from multiple sources on behalf of a complex and evolving understanding."

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