**Transitional Charter for the University Center for Multidisciplinary Studies (UCMS) at Rochester Institute of Technology**

**November 2010**

1. **Statement of mission, goals, and general purpose the Center**

**General Description of the Center and its Students and Stakeholders**

The Center for Multidisciplinary Studies is being re-established under a new set of operating principles which will serve to guide its operation as the “University Center for Multidisciplinary Studies”. University Center for Multidisciplinary Studies (CMS) offers both Associates and Bachelor degrees in Applied Arts and Sciences, and a Master of Science in Professional Studies. In addition, the Center offers a small number of undergraduate and advanced certificates. Through these programs, UCMS meets the needs of a variety of students both at the Rochester campus and at RIT’s global campuses in Kosovo and Dubai. As of 2010-1, program enrollments exceeded 1,129 (915 FTE). In 2009, UCMS certified over 300 students for degrees and certificates.

UCMS programs are characterized by a student centered approach to degree planning which enables students to participate in the design and development of their plans of study. Unlike traditional programs, where curriculum-specific outcomes are defined *a priori* by the faculty, the Applied Arts and Science and Professional Studies degrees engage learners in the design of their curriculum and the specification of program specific learning outcomes. Intentionality is achieved through student articulation of career and academic goals which are refined through personalized professional advising, faculty oversight and guidance, and iterative self reflection. This process results in a plan of study which: 1. Considers the student’s long term professional and academic goals; 2. Provides both depth and breadth of knowledge within the professional concentrations; and 3. Maximizes the credits received from previous course work while complying with university guidelines and accreditation rules. The ability to put their goals in the center of the degree planning process is uniquely attractive to a range of students and organizations. It is a distinguishing feature of UCMS programs within the RIT portfolio—a feature we believe could be leveraged to further grow the program.

**Students and Stakeholders**

**Adult and Part-time Students:** UCMS has long served as a primary vehicle for adult-learners to access an RIT degree. The flexibility of the degree, combined with a policy of maximizing the use of credits attained through prior learning, and a sustained commitment to offering evening and online classes, have attracted many full- and part-time adult students to the degrees. While this group has declined as a percentage of the Center’s overall FTE enrollment, they remain a large and strategically important stakeholder group. National priorities for educational attainment emphasize the role adult learners will play in raising U.S. educational rankings (<http://chronicle.com/article/To-Reach-Obamas-2020-Goal/63646/>). RIT’s strength in career education, combined with its sustained commitment to educating working adult students, means it is well positioned to support these national goals. Through the Applied Arts and Science and Professional Studies degrees, RIT is able to be flexible and responsive to the needs of the incumbent workforce and to contribute to both regional and national workforce development priorities.

**Transitioning Full-time Students:** In a typical year, internal transfer students account for approximately 50 percent of all newly enrolled UCMS students. The undergraduate degree plays an important role in retention and offers transitioning students a strong option for degree completion. There is a general misperception that UCMS students only enroll in the programs because they are in academic distress—this is simply not true. In 2009, the average GPA of internal transfers to CMS was 2.66. The average GPA of students graduating in 2009 was 3.03. Students are attracted to the degree because it allows them to pursue their interests and to combine specializations which have been proven to be attractive to both employers and highly selective graduate schools.

**NTID Students:** As of 2010-1 sixty-three (63) NTID supported students were enrolled in the Bachelors degree program in Applied Arts and Sciences. UCMS has the largest population of NTID students enrolled among all RIT programs. Most of these students come through one of two articulation agreements with NTID programs in Lab Science and Technology and Administrative Support Technology. The Applied Arts and Science degree provides the flexibility needed to accommodate NTID coursework and the design of complementary professional concentrations at RIT. Over the past 8 years UCMS has worked closely with our colleagues in NTID to ensure that their students cannot enroll directly into UCMS programs and to ensure that the students have the necessary university and departmental support services. Personalized professional advising is an important reason many NTID students are attracted to UCMS programs. The Center has made a concerted effort to have all professional advisors trained in ASL and has put in place other technologies to support NTID transfer students.

**International Students:** The Applied Arts and Science Degree and the Professional Studies Degree are attractive to RIT’s growing population of international students. The degrees have supported partnerships with government programs targeting international students from the Middle East and Central Asia and have enabled institutional partnerships with universities in Spain, the Dominican Republic, and Kazakhstan.

**Corporations and Government Agencies:** Throughout its history, CMS has collaborated with numerous corporations to develop programs which respond to specific needs of our corporate and community partners. For example, there are currently over 80 Xerox mid-level managers enrolled in online Applied Arts and Science degree. Their program includes concentrations from the College of Imaging Arts and Sciences and coursework from the College of Liberal Arts. Similar programs have been developed for Kodak, Paetec, and Exxon-Mobil. UCMS is currently collaborating with the Department of Criminal Justice to respond to a request from the Rochester Police Department**.**

**Entering Freshmen:** We believe there is an opportunity to attract new students who might not find their specific interests in RIT’s current program portfolio but who want to come to RIT and pursue a variety of interests, or who are attracted to the larger themes associated with the university. Thus, we envision working closely with University Studies to open the degree to late stage freshman or sophomores as a “Personalized Plan of Study” option which integrates well with other degree programs and Institute requirements. Such programs are emerging across the U.S.—the most notable at Ohio State University[[1]](#footnote-1).

**Mission and Goals**

The mission of the University Center for Multidisciplinary Studies is focused around five major strategic themes. Each theme addresses new opportunities within RIT to better support students, to enhance cross-college collaboration, and to extend RIT’s global reach. Each theme explicitly referenced in RIT’s Strategic Plan.

**Educational pathways for non-traditional students:** The University Center for Multidisciplinary Studies will be charged with supporting students seeking non-traditional paths through RIT. Students who seek out the Applied Arts and Science program often have very high grade point averages and a very clear sense of purpose. They take courses from engineering, science, liberal arts, and creative disciplines and combine them in the most extraordinary and exciting ways. In addition to supporting these students, the University would be a place where students who are transitioning from one program to another within RIT are supported and empowered to explore options. This dimension of the Center’s charge would be complementary to the University Studies program, but in practice would specifically address the needs of students who are transitioning in their sophomore, junior, or even senior year. We also envision the Center playing a role in supporting students who wish to engage in faculty supported co-curricular learning either at RIT or internationally. Further, the Center would support students who come with exceptional professional backgrounds and would facilitate certification of their prior learning and education.

**Intercollegiate Faculty Collaboration in Course and Curriculum Development:** Working in tandem with the Colleges and the Wallace Center**,** UCMS will provide the resources and platform to support faculty collaboration on new interdisciplinary course development; provide the administrative support for cross listed course offerings; and provide the means for proposing and offering inter-departmental and inter-collegiate specializations. The Center will work to engage faculty from all of the colleges in creating multidisciplinary courses and programs which address key university priorities. For example, CMS has embraced five innovation courses developed by the inter-collegiate faculty committee who created the proposed minor in innovation. We envision multi-college teams of faculty teaching these courses and providing the context for intercollegiate collaboration around the innovation theme. The goal is to support the integration of high priority themes within the disciplines embodied in the colleges. To achieve this integration, we believe faculty must be afforded the opportunity to interact with and experiment with their peers from other colleges. The University Center for Multidisciplinary Studies would provide these opportunities for faculty.

**Student Choice and Options:** President Destler’s Guiding Principles for Academics includes the following: “Flexible and responsive curricula, programs, and systems will characterize the educational infrastructure.” There are no other degree programs within the RIT portfolio as flexible as those offered by the University Center for Multidisciplinary Studies. Having a flexible and personalized degree program has become an emerging best practice among universities across the U.S. Such programs play an important role in retention and in supporting students as they transition within the university. The Applied Arts and Science degree can play an important role in RIT’s goals for improving retention and in offering flexible options for students.

**International Education and Global Outreach:** The Applied Arts and Science and Professional Studies degrees are the perfect vehicle for creating dual and joint degree programs with other universities around the world. They are highly flexible degrees which could accommodate content from both RIT and partnering institutions. Pursuing such partnerships could expand the network of collaborating institutions and could thereby facilitate RIT’s goals in international education. In addition, UCMS currently provides many of the support services for RIT’s global outreach programs—these services would continue to be provided and possibly expanded to complement RIT’s goals related to global and international education. In fact, many dimensions of this expanded role have been implemented within UCMS.

**Corporate and Community Outreach**: Through its *Global Outreach and Education* unit, UCMS partners with corporations and other community organizations to support their goals for workforce development by offering flexible and responsive training and education programs. The Applied Arts and Science and Professional Studies degrees have been used by organizations such as Xerox, Kodak, the New York State Troopers, and many others address targeted corporate and organizational goals. In addition, the *Global Outreach and Education* unit oversees the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) Education Institute Training Center. The center delivers occupational safety and health training throughout OSHA’s Region II—a geographic area covering all of New York, New Jersey, and the Virgin Islands.

1. **Mission Statement:** By embracing these themes, the University Center for Multidisciplinary Studies extends RIT’s national and international presence by being a global leader in the development and delivery of high-quality lifelong learning opportunities that blend innovative, unique, and customized multidisciplinary curricula with creative outreach-oriented methods of delivery. The Center achieves its mission through:
	1. Strong collaboration with all of RIT’s colleges in the development of curriculum and programs which meet the needs of “non-traditional” students.
	2. Supporting learning as a lifelong process at various stages of a person’s professional and personal development.
	3. Valuing and recognizing both formal and informal learning and the variety of ways students attain applied and theoretical knowledge.
	4. Developing curricula that are learner centered, reflective of the learner’s goals, considerate of his or her prior learning, relevant to his or her professional context, and consistent with his or her personal values.
	5. Providing multidisciplinary curricula which enhance personal development and strengthen the learner’s ability to succeed in the contemporary world of work.
	6. Providing flexible and accessible modes of delivering.
	7. Ensuring that teaching, advising, and student service activities are focused on student success and responsive to student needs.
	8. Valuing and supporting the professional development and advancement of faculty and staff colleagues.
	9. Being open to partnerships that support the attainment of our mission.
	10. Actively seeking new markets and new opportunities to advance RIT’s global presence.
2. **Vision Statement:** The University Center for Multidisciplinary Studies is an internationally recognized leader in the development of student centered flexible learning options for RIT students around the world. Through strong intercollegiate collaboration and a commitment to proactive engagement with key stakeholders, the Center creates leading edge multidisciplinary curricula which support RIT’s vision of being the Global Innovation University.

## Goals, objectives and key metrics

## Goal 1: Support the University’s retention and recruitment goals by providing flexible student centered alternatives to RIT students.

## Objective: Work in tandem with the University Studies program, the Institute Advising Office, Enrollment Management, the College Restoration Program, and academic departments to serve students who would benefit from the flexibility and student centered academic program options available through UCMS.

## Key metrics for success:

## Program enrollments and enrollment growth

## Internal transfers to UCMS and associated graduation rates

## Resiliency and degree completion rates among CRP students enrolling in UCMS programs

**Goal 2: Support the University’s goals related to undergraduate and graduate multidisciplinary education, innovation, and global education by providing the necessary administrative and academic program support to students and faculty interested in global program development and interdisciplinary collaboration.** Our goal is to enable and support intercollegiate collaboration among faculty on course design and delivery. Thus, we envision the Center being a place where faculty from two or more departments could come together to incubate new curricula and to explore new interdisciplinary course development strategies.

**Objective:** Work in tandem with academic departments from across RIT to deliver the proposed minor in innovation and to create interdisciplinary professional and general education courses.

## Objective: Collaborate with the Center for Teaching and Learning and academic departments to support cutting edge interdisciplinary pedagogy.

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## Key metrics for success:

* + - Implementation of the Cross-college minor in Innovation
		- Enrollment in the Cross-college minor in Innovation
		- Enrollments in interdisciplinary general education courses offered by the Center
		- University-wide proliferation of new interdisciplinary professional and general education courses
		- The number of co-listed and cross-listed course options supported by the Center
		- Cross-college faculty participation

**Goal 3: Support RIT’s goals related to global and international education by providing flexible program and course options to RIT’s global campuses and students.**

**Objective:** Work in collaboration with the leadership of RIT’s global campuses, and with academic departments from across RIT, to meet the academic program needs of the global campuses.

**Key metrics for success:**

* Student success at our global campuses
* Localized course options for our global campuses

**Goal 4:** **Support RIT’s capacity to engage with corporate and government partners and community stakeholders by developing online, onsite, hybrid, and other flexible course delivery options which meet the needs of working adults and non-traditional students.**

**Objective:** Collaborate with academic departments and institutes to develop responsive programs and delivery models for non-traditional students and working adults.

## Key metrics for success:

* + - Online and hybrid course enrollments and credit hours generated
		- Enrollments and revenue from Global Outreach Education and Training

**Goal 5: Engage in and support campus-wide scholarship which advances knowledge and best practices in interdisciplinary and international outreach pedagogy.**

**Objective:** Host speakers, forums, colloquia, and other opportunities for RIT faculty to develop knowledge of international and interdisciplinary pedagogy.

**Objective:** Produce and disseminate scholarship related to interdisciplinary and global outreach pedagogy.

**Objective:** Write grants and develop external funding streams to support faculty and student opportunities to participate in interdisciplinary and international outreach scholarship and pedagogy.

**Key metrics for success:**

* **Annual number of speakers, colloquia, and forums**
* **Faculty participation in events and scholarship opportunities**
* **External funding**
1. **Curricular oversight and course development: The University Multidisciplinary Curriculum Committee**

The transition of the Center for Multidisciplinary Studies (CMS) from the College of Applied Science and Technology (CAST) to the Provost’s Office, has created an opportunity to establish a new, more inclusive framework and process for curriculum development and governance of the Center. As a university resource, the Center seeks to deepen engagement of faculty colleagues from across the university to strengthen and broaden course and program offerings. Further, to avoid developing redundant or potentially competing programs, the Center would benefit from consistent, coordinated communication with faculty colleagues from each of the colleges. To achieve these goals, the UCMS will be guided by the following principles and processes for course and curriculum development:

1. To sustain its position as a university resource and to avoid potential conflicts with the colleges and institutes, the UCMS should focus exclusively on delivering existing undergraduate and graduate certificate programs; the Applied Arts and Science diploma, Associates, and Bachelors degree programs; and, the Professional Studies Masters of Science degree. The UCMS would not develop new degree programs outside of those currently being offered by CMS.
2. Cross-college course and program development would be done through a Multidisciplinary Curriculum Committee. The purpose and function of this committee is described in detail below. Working through this committee, the UCMS could develop courses, minors, and appropriate certificate programs. However, the committee, and the UCMS Director, must ensure that any new course proposals are not redundant with existing course offerings and must formally affirm that departments potentially aligned with the subject matter do not want to offer such a course. The Provost will arbitrate situations where conflicts arise over course offerings viewed to be inappropriate to RIT’s mission or the mission of UCMS. The committee would be charged with working with the Director of UCMS to ensure that the appropriate faculty expertise is affiliated with UCMS

**Multidisciplinary Curriculum Committee**

The Multidisciplinary Curriculum Committee will support university wide collaboration on course and program development through the Center for Multidisciplinary Studies (CMS). The committee will review courses and programs offered by CMS and work in consultation with colleagues in the colleges to:

1. Assure the uniqueness, strength, relevance, and consistency of new academic courses and programs offered by the Center for Multidisciplinary Studies
2. Periodically review the CMS course and program portfolio to assure it is aligned with university goals for multidisciplinary education
3. Propose modifications and enhancements to the CMS curriculum and program portfolio
4. Support assessment of student learning outcomes of CMS programs

**Function and Composition of the Committee**

The committee will review and approve courses to be offered in CMS which are submitted from program/departmental curriculum committees from across the University. CMS will maintain a departmental curriculum committee that will submit course and program proposals developed within the Center to the Multidisciplinary Curriculum Committee. The Multidisciplinary Curriculum Committee will be comprised of:

1. A faculty member from the Center for Multidisciplinary Studies;
2. A college faculty representative from each college and degree granting institute, to be elected by the faculty of the college or institute;
3. A representative of the Provost-Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs.

**Committee Chair**

The faculty representative from the University Center for Multidisciplinary Studies will serve as the Chair of the Multidisciplinary Curriculum Committee.

1. **Degree Certification**

Although precedent has been set for certifying degrees outside of colleges, the practice is generally considered an exception to policy and, in the case of UCMS, would require developing a new policy. Thus, UCMS seeks to operate under an exception to current policy by allowing degrees to be certified by the UCMS Director.

Exception to policy requires a full understanding of the current process used to develop and ultimately certify the UCMS degree. It is a process where the intentional goals of the student are guided by cadre of professional advisors; reviewed and modified by tenured UCMS faculty; and, where appropriate, evaluated by other departments; and ultimately certified by the UCMS Director. In seeking this exception, we believe this established process, combined with university-wide oversight of curriculum development, ensures faculty oversight, program integrity, and cohesiveness of the degrees.

**Statement of educational goals/purpose:** The UCMS degree programs all start with a statement of purpose written by the student and supported by a UCMS professional advisor. The student and advisor then work in tandem to develop a draft plan of study which addresses the stated professional, personal, and multidisciplinary educational goals of the student. The advisor ensures the draft plan incorporates all pre-requisite courses and works in tandem with departments across RIT to ensure the student will have access to the courses included in the draft plan. The draft plan of study serves to inform UCMS faculty and collaborating departments of the student’s intended plan of study.

**Advisor Committee Review of the Draft Plan of Study:** The UCMS professional advisors meet every two weeks to review student draft plans of study. The primary purpose of this review is to ensure that the plan meets both the UCMS degree requirements and satisfies RIT’s policies.

**Faculty Committee Review of the Draft Plan of Study:** Undergraduate programs are reviewed and approved by the *Applied Arts and Science Committee* which is comprised of UCMS full-time faculty and a faculty representative from NTID. The committee meets every two weeks throughout the year. Graduate programs are reviewed and approved by the *Professional Studies Graduate Review Committee* which is comprised of faculty from UCMS and dean’s delegates (including faculty and advisors) from the College of Applied Science and Technology, the Golisano College of Computing and Information Sciences, the National Technical Institute for the Deaf, and the E. Phillip Saunders College of Business. This committee meets quarterly. For graduate programs, the student’s planned concentrations must be approved by the home department offering the courses. The purpose of each committee is to ensure that the intended plan of study has been consciously designed; that it can reasonably meet the student’s stated goals; and, that it is consistent with RIT policy. Committee approval of the plans of study results in admission to the respective degree programs.

**External departmental review:** Where appropriate, the UCMS committees may ask the department offering courses in the plan to review the student’s concentrations. This is done for all graduate program concentrations. External review is typically done for undergraduate programs where a potential for course redundancy exists or where course access, course sequencing, and accreditation guidelines might limit the student’s ability to complete the degree. The programs for all transferring NTID students are developed in close collaboration with NTID support services to ensure access services are provided.

**Review of subsequent changes:** It is common for students to change courses within their intended plan of study. UCMS requires a review of a program plan when three or more substantive changes are made to the plan. In this case, the plan is brought back to the respective faculty committee for review and approval of the revisions.

1. **Faculty**

Over time the Center will have a representative faculty broadly constituted from each of the colleges and institutes at RIT. Initially, the Center’s faculty will be comprised of the existing faculty housed in CMS—all of whom have appointments in CAST. As faculty retire, the resources associated with these positions will be used to support tenured faculty from across the campus who are interested in either the outreach dimensions or interdisciplinary curriculum dimensions of the Center’s goals. Consistent with RIT Policy, no faculty will be tenured in UCMS. Rather, college-based faculty would be appointed to the new University Center under a range of long-term (one to two year) and short-term (one to three quarters) affiliation options designed to enable them to retain their appointments in the colleges. Resources would be provided from the Center to the Colleges to support the appointment of the faculty member to the University level work. Faculty affiliated with the Center will retain all of the rights attributed to them as tenured faculty in their respective college. The Center will hire lecturers as needed.

Appointments for affiliated faculty will be made through an annual call for faculty from the Provost. To ensure their work addresses a university priority, this call would make explicit reference to the nature of the course/curriculum focus of the appointments. The Provost will be guided by the Multidisciplinary Curriculum Committee on the priorities to be addressed. Faculty applying for affiliated positions would be required to have their Dean and Department Head sign off on their application. The UCMS Director will establish a process for final selection of affiliated faculty which considers both the priorities outlined by the Multidisciplinary Curriculum Committee and the resources available to support them.

1. **Administration of the University Center**

The Center will be administered by a Director and an Associate Director. The Director will report to the Provost and will have responsibility for overseeing the activities of UCMS that contribute to student success and program growth. The director will also oversee the operation of the Global Outreach Education and Training Unit. The director is specifically responsible for:

1. Student orientation and the development of orientation programs which support the non-traditional nature of UCMS students
2. Student advising and management of the UCMS cadre of professional advisors
3. Working in collaboration with the Multidisciplinary Curriculum Committee to develop programs and curricula which are consistent with the goals of UCMS and RIT
4. Administration, scheduling, and management of affiliated faculty and oversight of instructional quality
5. Supporting program assessment and review
6. Degree and certificate certification and degree audit
7. Management of the UCMS and Global Outreach Education and Training budgets
8. Ensuring the necessary faculty and lecturer expertise exists in UCMS to deliver proposed courses and programs
9. Faculty and staff development in support of RIT goals for student, faculty, and staff success.
10. Making/submitting an annual report to the Academic Senate and to the Dean’s Council.

The Center will reconstitute an external advisory board and will comply with RIT policy on Academic Centers.

1. **Incremental Resources**

The budgets of the Center for Multidisciplinary Studies and Global Outreach Education are established operating budgets within Academic Affairs. No incremental resources are anticipated to establish the Center as a University Center for Multidisciplinary Studies.

1. Details on the Ohio State program can be found at: <http://ascadvising.osu.edu/programs/psp> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)