

Immersion in the College of Arts and Science

September 2017

The faculty of the College of Arts and Science recognize that in-depth learning and the completion of significant projects are important and valuable components of the liberal arts undergraduate education. The curricular framework for Immersion outlined below aims to capture existing in-depth learning opportunities for students and to facilitate the design of new Immersion options.

Basic Features:

Definition of Immersion Project: An Immersion Project involves tangible demonstration of accomplishment in research, creative expression, civic or professional activity, or global or community engagement. Immersion comprises a group of individual or collaborative activities and/or courses that cohere around a theme and include the completion of a final project. An Immersion Project may be comprised of course work and/or approved Immersion activities outside of the classroom. An Immersion Project will consist of about 9 credit hours or the approximate equivalent effort.

The College already offers numerous opportunities to students to engage in in-depth learning experiences that would qualify as Immersion. These include honors courses and other capstone projects, research of various kinds (including laboratory, field, and library research), and projects involving creative expression. The Immersion Program will encourage and support the development of other new forms of project-based learning as well.

Immersion Plan: Each student will develop a plan in consultation with advisors in the Office of Immersion Resources, department/program Immersion Coordinator, and relevant Project faculty supervisors. Students may begin to develop this plan during their second year of course work. Immersion plans must be approved before the end of the student's third year of study.

Implementation:

Immersion Project supervision: All faculty members in Arts & Sciences, independent of rank and academic unit, are invited to serve as Immersion supervisors and explore Immersion as an opportunity for new types of research and teaching experiences. Any Vanderbilt faculty member can agree to supervise an Immersion Project, as part of an existing course, as part of a specially designed course, or as an independent study. Any faculty member, regardless of rank, may decline to participate, without penalty.

Faculty Approval of Immersion Plans: An Immersion Coordinator appointed in each department and program will receive compensation to evaluate and approve Immersion Plans in relevant academic areas.

Immersion Project reporting: Progress toward and completion of an Immersion Project will be recorded through a simple procedure similar to that now used for recording honors enrichment. Separate grades for Immersion Projects will not be required.

Immersion Activities Outside the Classroom: Faculty will **not** be responsible for evaluating non-course-based portions of Immersion Projects. These will be evaluated and approved as completed according to procedures to be established by A&S Directors of Immersion in coordination with the Office of Immersion Resources. Only A&S faculty can approve Immersion Plans and Projects for A&S students; faculty will therefore have an opportunity to question students about the suitability of non-course activities.

Role of departments and programs: Departments and programs may wish to organize and designate special courses that offer students the opportunity to complete an Immersion Project. They may also choose to bundle courses (within their own units or together with other units) to highlight immersion options. Examples already proposed are Archaeological Field Studies and Shakespeare Immersion.

Programs and departments are expected to develop strategies to ensure a fair distribution of Immersion-related activities among their faculty members, recognize Immersion-related activities as a valuable service, and protect faculty in vulnerable positions from being drawn into participation in an inequitable number of Immersion activities.

Faculty Compensation and College Resources:

Compensation for faculty:

Fairness and transparency must be guiding principles in implementing, supporting, and rewarding faculty engagement with students. Compensation for substantial faculty effort must be fair and transparent both across and within A&S departments and programs. Any new compensation arrangements should consider the full range of work that faculty do, beyond their regular teaching assignments, to support undergraduate education. This should include, but not be limited to, Immersion-related activities.

At the department or program level, at least one Immersion Coordinator will be appointed in each department or program, and will receive compensation for review and approval of Immersion Plans.

At the College level, four faculty members will be appointed as Directors of Immersion, one in each of the three CAS divisions and one to serve as principal liaison between CAS and the Office of Immersion Resources. Each will participate in approval of Immersion Plans and completed Projects and will receive compensation.

As needed, departments and programs should propose additional compensation (stipends or course release) for faculty in their units who devote substantial effort toward Immersion (for example, through supervision of numerous Immersion Projects). This approach recognizes differences in disciplinary and unit cultures.

An Immersion Committee will be created to oversee and periodically evaluate Immersion. The Committee will make recommendations to the Faculty Council and College and University administration for improving Immersion activities and resource distribution.

The A&S Faculty Council will convene and charge a subcommittee to review how to compensate faculty who devote substantial time to engagements with undergraduate students and undergraduate education beyond their regular teaching duties. This will include, but will not be limited to, Immersion-related contributions. While taking into consideration the wide diversity of activities among different disciplines and programs, the principles of fairness and transparency will guide the development of recommended standards and procedures for determining these compensation arrangements across and within programs in the College of Arts and Science.

Funds for immersion-related instruction:

Each semester the college will award grants of \$1,000 to \$10,000 to faculty or departments/programs in support of immersion activities. Examples include funding for field trips or field research, undergraduate laboratory opportunities, coordinated visits to archives or libraries, or other activities.

University Resources:

Funding in support of faculty compensation. The provost's office has provided CAS with funds that will be utilized for immersion coordinator stipends and meeting new instructional needs.

Office of Immersion Resources. This fall (2017), the Provost's office is opening and staffing an office that will serve to advise undergraduates as they draft Immersion Plans; to inform students about immersion opportunities; to sponsor events for students presenting their Immersion Projects; to record completion of non-course, non-credit immersion projects; and to provide other assistance designed to meet each individual school/college's respective immersion needs and requirements.

Other university resources available to support faculty efforts in Immersion include funds for TIPS-based Immersion projects; Immersion-based courses developed through the Cross-College Teaching initiative and Commons iSeminars; programming at the Innovation Center/Wondry; internships through the Career Center, study abroad and the Global Summer Scholars in GEO; and undergraduate summer research project funding (VUSR).

MOTIONS FOR A&S FACULTY VOTE:

Motion 1:

The faculty of the College of Arts and Science approves an Immersion graduation requirement, beginning with students in the incoming class of fall 2018, undergraduate transfer students who enter as sophomores in fall 2019 and undergraduate transfer students who enter as juniors in fall 2020.

Motion 2:

In the 2023-2024 academic year, the faculty of the College of Arts and Science will review and vote on whether or not to continue the Immersion requirement for CAS undergraduates.