

Preface:

Earlier this year, I was fortunate enough to witness the University of Pennsylvania Chemistry Prof. Alan MacDiarmid's reprisal of his Nobel Prize in Chemistry (2000) acceptance speech. In his speech, Dr. MacDiarmid stressed the importance of interdisciplinary research with collaborations of experts from several different disciplines. He claimed that such interdisciplinary collaborations were directly responsible for his receiving the Nobel Prize. I found this speech particularly moving, as I have held the same opinion of the importance of interdisciplinarity for years.

I have long had a passion for interdisciplinary research and curricula, especially since my interests do not fit within the narrow framework of a single discipline. Additionally, I have enjoyed mapping my own route and making my own way. As an undergraduate at Harvard, my curriculum was self-designed in a Bachelor of Liberal Arts Program in Psychobiology. My course work in my major was a combination of Physiological Psychology and Neurobiology courses. I continued this Psychobiology plan of study in a Master of Liberal Arts Program at the University of Pennsylvania (Penn), taking courses in Neuroscience, Pharmacology, the Biological Basis of Behavior, Biology and Cognitive Development in Education.

The penultimate culmination of my interdisciplinary studies has been the self-designed Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.) Post-Master's Degree Program in Cognitive Neuroscience at Penn. This has allowed me to continue my studies and research in the underlying biology of the mind. In this program, I was able to take course work in Cognitive Neuroscience in the Psychology Dept., Cognitive Development in the Graduate School of Education, Biological and Behavioral Correlates in the Nursing School, and graduate independent studies in Biology allowing me to work in a neuroimaging lab conducting research out of the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania.

These liberal yet visionary degree programs have assisted me in discovering my calling, to become a research professor at the university level. I will come one step closer to this goal in August 2001, when I commence a Ph.D. Program in Complex Systems and Brain Sciences at Florida Atlantic University (FAU). The program and the Center for Complex Systems and Brain Sciences were founded by a husband and wife team J.A. Scott Kelso, Ph.D. (former professor at Yale) and Betty Tuller Ph.D. (former professor at Cornell) some 15 years ago, who, in addition to dreading weekend commutes to meet in Manhattan, wished to form a unique non-traditional, non-departmental program that was intrinsically interdisciplinary in the brain sciences. The two were unable to get this freedom 15 years back at their respective Ivy League institutions. At FAU, they had complete autonomy to create their vision. The program combines advanced theories of Biophysics, advanced Mathematics (Calculus), Computer Science and Neuroscience to study the brain-behavior relationship.

As I am about to start a new chapter in my interdisciplinary education, I would like to acknowledge those who have encouraged and inspired me along the way. The Director of the A.L.B. Program at Harvard, Suzanne Spreadbury, Ed.M., has had great faith in my abilities even when I had doubts myself. My undergraduate mentor, Michael Hasselmo, D.Phil., has continued to encourage me and to believe in my ability despite my learning differences. In graduate school at the University of Pennsylvania, my academic advisor, Susan Gill, Ph.D., has been the "wind beneath my wings" in a "sea of adversity". (Please pardon the cliché mixed -metaphors!) Her passion for interdisciplinary science and her confidence in me have helped me to blossom. I owe a great deal to Janet Theophano, Ph.D., Director the M.L.A./M.Phil. Programs at Penn, as none of this would have been possible without her. Additionally, I am thankful to Jill V. Hunter, M.D., for pushing me to learn more than I wanted to in my stress-induced pseudo-psychotic delirium, as she was insightful in doing so. Last, but not least, Douglas Frye, Ph.D., my mentor, has remained a calm, levelheaded and very intelligent influence, guiding me in my nervous madness in dealing with difficult situations. He has treated me as a fellow faculty member in collaborating and planning research that most individuals at my level only dream about. His confidence in me has convinced me that I have the ability to become a research professor at the university level.