University Commitments to Cycle 5 Programs:

1. Academic and Career Advising
a. The University will look into providing institutional assistance for graduate/professional school preparation in terms of publicizing and making certain that standardized test preparation programs are available. Although the MOA does not make this clear, one of the primary purposes of this item for MLS/IDS was to assist our students in preparing for academic or professional life after earning the MA, rather than to help students prepare for our MLS or IDS. (We do not require these tests.) To date we have received no information about whether such a program has been instituted.

b. The University will look into implementing advising alerts through Campus Connect that encourage students to contact their advisors prior to enrolling in courses. We understand that this feature of Campus Connect is coming. Meanwhile we have created a Blackboard site for all students in the two programs. The site allows us to post announcements reminding students about their advisement obligations, and also allows us to send emails to students about advising schedules.

2. Diversity:
Diversity. Consistent with the University’s mission, DePaul University remains strongly committed to promoting the diversity of faculty, students, and staff. Academic Affairs will support a variety of strategies developed by departments and programs to enhance such diversity. The only efforts for which we have sought assistance from other University offices have been in recruitment. Although we have participated vigorously in the Open Houses for "customized" graduate programs, we have met with resistance from the office of Adult Admissions in helping us in recruitment efforts that we have proposed. See also below under "Recruitment."

University Commitments to Interdisciplinary Studies Programs:

1. Cross Referencing Courses. The University will look into having ARC (the Advising Resource Center) identify departmental courses that count for credit in various interdisciplinary studies programs and cross-referencing those courses in Campus Connect under interdisciplinary program headings to increase student awareness of course options in the Interdisciplinary Studies Programs. To my knowledge, the
university has not done this. One reason for this initiative was to address issues of enrollment in certain courses. Since the MOA was signed, enrollments in MALS courses have been kept at healthy levels through vigorous cross-listing. It also seems that the awareness of MALS courses on the part of students in other graduate programs has increased, possibly because of greater facility in using the Campus Connect Class Search function. We have also strongly encouraged IDS students to take advantage of the intimate and stimulating learning community in MALS courses. Thus even in the most recent offering of the one MALS course which is not cross-listed (MLS 401, Visions of the Self) there was an enrollment of 18 students.

Actions agreed upon for the coming academic year:

1. Data Collection. *With the assistance of OIPR and using methodologies of the program's own creation data will be obtained to identify students active within the MALS program, students who have become inactive, and other characteristics of interest regarding MALS’ students.* To establish these data, we have used a combination of university data supplemented with our own program records. (We have found a number of situations in which the official does not include students whom we regard as in the program, for example, students who have transferred from other DePaul graduate programs, students who have not taken courses for more than a year, students actively working on final projects but not registering for courses or paying other fees to the University.) We developed data on degree completion progress among 77 students active in the program. The degree completion issue is addressed further under section 2d. We also collected data on the number of minority students entering the programs.

2. Student initiatives
a. Recruitment. *The progress of the part-time recruiter hired by the program will be monitored and evaluated. Additionally, the identification of additional ways to improve enrollment and market the program’s distinctiveness will be carried out.* The Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences agrees to assist by making inquiries with David Justice, to determine if a MALS link can be established in the advising section of the Lifelong Learning website. The Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences also agrees to assist by making inquiries with the Office of Alumni Relations, so that the MLS/IDS Program may have access to alumni contact information among likely audiences for its programs. Our recruiter was originally given a 5-4 split in her responsibilities, so that she taught five courses, and gave a little less time to MLS/IDS activities. Last year that ratio was changed to 6-3. Because of her dedication and creativity, her recruitment activities have increased rather than lessened. In addition to DePaul-sponsored events she makes contact with Human Resources departments throughout the region, and attends career fairs in Chicago and the suburbs. Approximately a third of the applicants to the two programs have made their initial contact with DePaul through the recruiter. The recruiter has had only limited success in working with Adult Admissions and Alumni. So far the Dean's office has either not made efforts to work with the Office of Alumni Relations or the Lifelong Learning Unit, or has been no more successful than we have on our own. We should renew our efforts.
once the new Dean has been appointed. We have been disappointed to encounter these
protective attitudes in the University. On the other hand, we have established a very
good working relationship with the graduate program in the School for New Learning.
We send each other prospective students on a regular basis.

b. Retention.  **Current retention rates and degree progress at time of drop out will be
determined. The program will investigate reasons for non-retention and, where possible,
plans to assist students past these obstacles will be enhanced or created. The impact of
the thesis requirement and the possibility of creating a non-thesis integrating project will be explored.** In preparation for our end-of-program revision project, we looked at
completion rates. Our students typically study part-time and may not be continuously
enrolled even in the earlier stages of their programs. It is easy for them to drift away
when they complete course work because of the challenges presented by the Integrating
Project. Our survey of 77 courses histories showed that more than 40% of our students
do not complete the program within seven years. We contacted a number of non-
completers and found out that, as we suspected, the time and energy commitment in
planning and executing an Integrating Project/Thesis prohibited many students from
finishing. At the same time, we became excited about the possibility of new kinds of
culminating projects through contacts with other graduate liberal studies programs. To
that end, we deliberated on our program requirements to determine if it were possible to
expand the options for a culminating project while remaining committed to our program
goals. Over a period of a year, during 2004-5, we agreed on a new three-option model
for program completion: (a) a thesis, (b) a practicum, either in the form of a public
intellectual exercise, service learning or a media project, with each variation documented
in an accompanying essay and (c) a portfolio project, including an essay reflecting on
learning in the program. Three subcommittees worked on descriptions and assessment
rubrics for these options. We are now in the final drafting stage of the proposal, which
we hope to present to the College Curriculum Committee for approval during spring,
2006.

c. Student Support.  **MALS will examine its student population for changes in the
demographics and skills of entering students. The program will look into required
advising and additional advising as a way to ground students in the program and provide
them assistance where necessary. It has been suggested that rather than encouraging
students to meet with their advisors once a year, quarterly meetings or communications
may be more appropriate.** The Blackboard site has been beneficial in improving
advising functions. We have strongly suggested that students seek advisement on a
quarterly rather than a yearly basis. A problem in implementing advisement with this
frequency is the availability of the Director and Assistant Director. Other members of the
Policy Committee are also multiply obligated with administrative responsibilities.

d. Student Progress and Success.  **The creation of program tracks, possibly around skill
themes; such as, creative leadership, communication/writing, and organizational
management concentrations, will be explored as a way to provide students’ with the
structure they may need to progress through the program in a timely manner.
Additionally, the restructuring of the program to encourage the completion of core
courses early on and to have a mid-point portfolio that focuses students on their goals will be investigated. Finally, the creation of a culminating experience with a capstone style course as an alternative to the integrating project/thesis requirement will be looked into. Program tracks have not been formally instituted, in part because of the difficulty in coordinating with other units which have resisted guaranteeing access to their courses, preferring ad hoc cross-listing or registration of individual students in non-cross listed courses. We have restructured the requirements so that students are now required to complete core courses before they take electives. Most students have complied. Even though students are aware of this requirement, implementation requires time taken on the part of the Director to look at student course histories. The mid-point portfolio (it will actually come slightly later than mid-point) will be part of the overall restructuring, since students will be required to submit the portfolio as part of their application for an end-of-program option. We did look into the possibility of a capstone course, but the Dean of LAS has allowed us only one non-cross-listed course per quarter, and we need to use these slots for core courses. The Portfolio Option in our new end-of-program choices is conducted as an independent study version of a capstone. If Independent Study Banking becomes a reality, faculty may be more inclined to participate in this option.

3. Curriculum. The relationship between the Interdisciplinary Studies Graduate Program and the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies will be defined, and the existing distinctions and commonalities between these sister programs will be preserved. When appropriate, students will be encouraged to move toward the program most appropriate for their goals. Our new recruitment/admissions modality involves a counseling session to determine which of the two programs is most appropriate for the inquirer or applicant. We have been successful in encouraging IDS students to take MALS core courses where appropriate. Significant numbers of students do transfer from one program to the other, usually from MALS to IDS as a strategy for completing an M.A. degree without doing a thesis or culminating project. This phenomenon was one of the motivations for looking into new end-of-program options.

4. Faculty
a. Current. The MALS program will determine the current demographic characteristics of its faculty and determine if an emphasis on diversity in recruiting is necessary. In part because our student population is diverse (32% minority in MALS; 39% in IDS), we have looked at our faculty to see if we have a corresponding diversity. At present, none of our Core Courses is being taught by minority faculty, though we have invited minority faculty to teach in the Core. However, minority faculty are well-represented among the courses we regularly cross-list. In Winter Quarter 2006, of the 24 courses which we cross-listed, 8 were taught by minority faculty.

b. Orientation. The program will create and formalize procedures to ensure that faculty are aware of the program’s mission and learning goals and that new faculty teaching
courses listed or cross-listed with the program are properly oriented. New faculty
teaching in the Core Courses are invited to an informal information session with the
Director and another faculty member who has taught in the Core. I have asked a group of
faculty in the Policy Committee to draft an information sheet about MALS and IDS for
faculty whose courses we cross-list. This document will not only describe the programs
and the students, but will also recommend in the case of 300-level courses that the faculty
member may make additional or alternative assignments if he or she feels that the
standard assignments will not challenge students at the graduate level.