

What does “transdisciplinary” mean?

“In a world where our graduates need to solve complex, interconnected challenges, it’s also critically important to create connections between faculty and students across disciplines. Rather than inventing new units, I propose we maintain the integrity of departments and schools while creating loose-knit, cross-University ‘transdisciplinary faculties’ to provide leadership along the three themes that define our aspiration as a University — community engagement, innovation, and intercultural engagement.

Intended to break down silos, these transdisciplinary faculties would include a faculty member from each unit. In collaboration with their home schools and departments, these faculties would be responsible for the development and oversight of experiential learning opportunities in each of these domains along with the development of relevant curricula.”

Spina, Eric F. “The University for the Common Good”. Presidential Inaugural Address, University of Dayton, Dayton OH. April 4, 2017. <https://udayton.edu/vision/stories/inaugural-address.php>


“A transdisciplinary team allows members to contribute their own knowledge and expertise, but efforts are collective in determining best ideas or approaches...”

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, as cited by Kokemuller, Neil (2011). What is the difference between a transdisciplinary team and a multidisciplinary team? Houston Chronicle. <http://smallbusiness.chron.com/difference-between-transdisciplinary-team-multidisciplinary-team-18762.html>

“Transdisciplinary: creating a unity of intellectual frameworks beyond the disciplinary perspectives.”

Refsum Jensenius, Alexander (2012). Disciplinarity: intra, cross, multi, inter, trans. <http://www.arj.no/2012/03/12/disciplinarity-2/a>





“Transdisciplinary collaboration occurs when people bring different disciplinary expertise to the table and strive to develop innovative, holistic and shared conceptual frameworks thereby de-emphasizing the contributing disciplines (Choi & Pak, 2006). In transdisciplinary work, ‘representatives of different disciplines are encouraged to transcend their separate conceptual, theoretical, and methodological orientations in order to develop a shared approach to research, building on a common conceptual framework’ that can be used to understand the problem holistically and, thereby, can develop novel approaches to address it, assessing those solutions iteratively as needed (Rosenfield, 1992, p. 1351). A transdisciplinary approach is problem-focused (Rosenfield, 1992), holistic (Max-Neef, 2005), and requires scholars from at least two disciplines to collaboratively develop innovative conceptual models that integrate the theories and methods of multiple disciplines for the purpose of developing new solutions to specific, common, real-world problems (see also Neuhauser, Richardson, Mackenzie, & Minkler, 2007; Park & Son, 2010; Stokols et al., 2008). In other words, transdisciplinary work surpasses interdisciplinary work in that it seeks to develop holistic perspectives by integrating different disciplinary perspectives, thereby creating new frameworks to understand problems for the purposes of developing solutions.”

Hay, M. C. (2017). Can undergraduates be transdisciplinary? Promoting transdisciplinary engagement through global health problem-based learning. *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*, 28(3), 51-88.

“Transdisciplinarity transcends disciplinary approaches through more comprehensive frameworks, including the synthetic paradigms of general systems theory and sustainability, as well as the shift from a disease model to a new paradigm of health and wellness. In the late 20th century, it also became aligned with problem-oriented research that crosses the boundaries of both academic and public and private spheres. In this second connotation, mutual learning, joint work, and knowledge integration are key to solving ‘real-world’ problems. The construct goes beyond interdisciplinary combinations of existing approaches to foster new worldviews or domains.”

NRC (National Research Council). 2014. *Convergence: Facilitating Transdisciplinary Integration of Life Sciences, Physical Sciences, Engineering, and Beyond*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

