

Interdisciplinary Skills and Learning Across Disciplines

Jessica Garnes

Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, Old Dominion University

IDS 493 ePortfolio Project

Professor: Tammy Sommer

March 6, 2026

Introduction

Pursuing a degree in Interdisciplinary Studies has provided me with the opportunity to develop a diverse set of academic and professional skills by incorporating knowledge from multiple disciplines. Rather than focusing on a single field, my coursework has combined studies in communications, healthcare management, dance, and theatre. This interdisciplinary approach has allowed me to develop strong communication abilities, organizational and technical skills, and creative expression. Each discipline contributed unique perspectives that helped shape my understanding of how different fields connect and influence one another. According to research on interdisciplinary studies, the approach integrates insights from different academic disciplines to produce more comprehensive knowledge and solutions than a single discipline could provide on its own (Klein, 2005; Menken & Kestra, 2016). Through this program, I learned how to analyze problems from multiple viewpoints, apply creative and analytical thinking, and communicate effectively in both professional and creative environments.

Creative Passion and the Inspiration Behind My Portfolio

Although I have taken classes in healthcare, management, and communications, my passion for performing arts, including acting, singing, and dancing, is what inspired the overall theme of my portfolio. I chose to design it in a way that reflects my creative interests and showcases the artistic influences that have shaped my academic and personal journey. I initially felt nervous about what materials to include because much of my work was not easily represented through tangible artifacts. Many of the dance course requirements focused on in-class practice, learning choreography, written reflections, and discussions rather than physical projects that could be saved and displayed. Although I did record small portions of my work at

times, I was unable to locate those recordings when assembling my portfolio. As a result, I had to think carefully about how to represent my learning experiences I developed throughout the course. After thoroughly reviewing my courses I completed and organized the first page of skills around key dance techniques, which I categorized into three areas: Ballet, Modern, and Choreography.

Overcoming Challenges in Ballet

I initially didn't expect taking ballet to be as hard as it was. Ballet challenged me both physically and mentally throughout the semester. I quickly learned that ballet requires endurance, physical strength, flexibility, and the ability to retain and understand French terminology used in the techniques and movements. Although I struggled at times, I also learned that struggling does not necessarily result in poor performance or bad grades. I recognized that I fell short in certain areas, particularly in dance technique, especially when comparing myself to other students who had years of ballet experience and had been dancing since childhood. Since I did not have prior ballet training, I knew I had to work harder to keep up with the expectations of the course. Because of this, I dedicated extra time to studying and preparing for both the written and physical components of the midterm and final exams. Thankfully I aced my mid-term and on top of that I earned extra credit. I remember practicing for hours for my ballet final. Recording myself, dancing in the mirror, counting the steps and doing it over and over again until I got it right and sure enough when I did my final dance recital, I aced that too. Studies on performing arts education suggest that repeated practice and rehearsal help students develop discipline, confidence, and resilience, which are essential skills in both academic and professional settings (Barton College, 2024). I was very proud of myself for not accepting defeat and seeing it all the way through.

Learning New Technology While Building My Portfolio

When creating my e-portfolio, I encountered several learning curves along the way. Wix was completely unfamiliar to me, and the thought of building an entire portfolio initially caused a great deal of anxiety. Despite these feelings, I knew I had to find a way to make it work. To get started, I sought help through ODU's e-portfolio tutoring services. Unfortunately, my first scheduled appointment was frustrating because the tutor did not show up. Determined not to fall behind, I quickly scheduled another appointment the same day. This time the tutor attended, and although we were able to make some progress, the session was limited due to time constraints.

Seeking Support and Solving Technical Problems

Later that day, I scheduled another tutoring session. I logged on early in hopes that the tutor might do the same, and fortunately she joined about 30 minutes before our scheduled time. With her assistance, I was able to better organize and structure my portfolio. However, I encountered another issue when I realized that the papers I had embedded on the site were not displaying properly. Since we could not determine the cause of the problem, the tutor suggested taking screenshots of the documents and uploading them as images instead. Although this was not the ideal solution, it allowed me to continue building my portfolio.

Reflecting on My Modern Dance Performance

As time began to run out and I still had several tasks to complete, I continued uploading artifacts using the methods I had learned. In the modern dance section of my portfolio, I included a paper that reflects on our end-of-semester concert. In this paper, I describe the long nights and hours of rehearsal, as well as the intricate details of my experience preparing for and performing

in the modern dance piece. I also reflect on the emotions I felt throughout the process and what it meant to be part of that performance.

Creating Original Choreography

Throughout my time in the dance program, I learned many forms of choreography from different dance genres. However, for my final project in Modern Dance, I was required to create my own choreography and perform it in front of my professor and classmates. This assignment required careful thought because our instructor asked us to intentionally incorporate specific dance movements that we had learned throughout the semester into our original piece.

Problem-Solving and Showcasing My Choreography

To prepare, I spent time practicing at home and recording myself so I could evaluate how the choreography looked and make improvements. While working on my portfolio, I remembered that I had recorded this practice and searched through my phone until I found the video footage. Once I located it, I had difficulty figuring out how to upload the video to my portfolio. I initially tried downloading the video to my computer and embedding it directly, but that method did not work. The next morning, I realized that I could upload the video to YouTube and then link it to my portfolio. Once I tried that approach, it worked successfully, and I felt relieved and excited that I was able to include the video as part of my portfolio.

Professional Experience and Technical Skills

When I was in the military, I did a world tour as a vocalist in a group called Tops In Blue. I've always had dreams of getting back on the stage as a performer whether it be on Broadway, a stage play, a movie or making my own album and touring. The dance program also required me

to take classes in theater. According to Barton College (2024), studying theater helps students develop valuable career skills including communication, time management, teamwork, organization, creativity, adaptability, and collaboration. In my introduction to film class, as the director of my group, I was tasked with the responsibility of making a call sheet. Under the Technical Skills tab, I have included several artifacts that demonstrate my abilities in organization, visual communication, and creative writing. These artifacts include a call sheet, a digital copyright poster, and an original song that I wrote and copyrighted. The call sheet demonstrates my ability to organize detailed information clearly and efficiently to support effective team coordination. The digital copyright poster highlights my skills in visual communication, audience awareness, and persuasive messaging by presenting important information in an engaging and accessible way. Additionally, the song artifact, which I filed for copyright, reflects my creative writing and storytelling abilities while illustrating how I can communicate ideas and emotions while also quoting bible scripture. Together, these artifacts showcase my ability to convey information across multiple media formats while balancing creativity, organization, and effective communication.

Conclusion

Overall, my experience in the Interdisciplinary Studies program has provided me with a well-rounded set of skills that combine communication, organization, and creativity.

Interdisciplinary research emphasizes that complex problems often require insights from multiple areas of expertise in order to produce effective solutions (Repko & Szostak, 2021).

Interdisciplinary methods and theories played a significant role in shaping my understanding of coursework and assignments. Instead of viewing each subject as separate, I

learned to integrate ideas from multiple disciplines when solving problems or completing projects. For example, communication strategies helped me organize the call sheet artifact, design principles supported the creation of the digital copyright poster, and creative storytelling techniques influenced the songwriting process. This combination of perspectives allowed me to approach assignments with both analytical and creative thinking.

Courses such as IDS 300W were especially important in preparing me for the coursework in my program. This course emphasized research, writing, and critical thinking skills that are essential for interdisciplinary learning. It also encouraged students to explore how different fields intersect and how knowledge from multiple disciplines can be used to address complex problems. Interdisciplinary approaches involve identifying an issue, examining perspectives from different fields, and synthesizing those insights to create more comprehensive understandings and innovative solutions to complex problems (Rahal & Vadeboncoeur, 2024). Through this course, I learned how to analyze information, develop organized arguments, and present ideas effectively.

Being an interdisciplinary thinker is important because many real-world challenges require solutions that draw from multiple fields of knowledge. Professionals often work in environments where collaboration and adaptability are necessary. The ability to integrate different perspectives allows individuals to approach problems creatively and develop more comprehensive solutions. Interdisciplinary thinking helps bridge communication, creativity, and organizational skills, making it possible to contribute effectively in a variety of professional roles. Research shows that integrating interdisciplinary learning can significantly improve students' communication, problem-solving skills, and ability to apply knowledge across different areas of study (Yang et al., 2024).

My interdisciplinary education has helped me develop skills that are valuable in both professional and creative environments. The ability to organize information, communicate visually, and express ideas creatively prepares me for future career opportunities while also allowing me to adapt to new challenges. Through the experiences and assignments represented in my portfolio, I have gained confidence in my abilities and a deeper understanding of how interdisciplinary learning can shape meaningful academic and professional growth.

Reference

Barton College. (2024). *Benefits of being a performing arts major*.

<https://www.barton.edu/benefits-of-being-a-performing-arts-major>

Menken, S. B. J., & Keestra, M. (Eds.). (2016). *An introduction to interdisciplinary research: Theory and practice*. Amsterdam University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1515/9789048531615>

Rahal, L., & Vadeboncoeur, J. A. (2024). *Interdisciplinarity*. EBSCO Research Starters.

<https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/social-sciences-and-humanities/interdisciplinarity>

Repko, A. F., & Szostak, R. (2021). *Interdisciplinary research: Process and theory* (3rd ed.).

SAGE Publications. Retrieved from <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/social-sciences-and-humanities/interdisciplinarity>

Yang, B.-H., Lo, K.-W., Li, Y.-S., & Chao, K.-Y. (2024). *Effects of integration interdisciplinary learning on student learning outcomes and healthcare-giving competence: A mixed methods study*. *BMC Nursing*, 23, Article

583. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12912-024-02260-w>