Proposal for
The Non-Disciplinary Festival

*Our campus can be stronger if we step out of our academic silos,
and learn to understand how each other thinks.*

Part of Joyce Wang's Fifth Year Scholar Application
Advised by Carrie Hagan, PhD

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Overview

The "Non-Disciplinary Festival" is for the entire Carnegie Mellon campus — undergraduate student, graduate students, faculty and staff. It asks participants from distinct disciplines to form groups of 3 or 4, and create something new that draws from their knowledge and experience.

Participants can make **anything creative:**
video, essay, apps, website, performance, zine, poetry, demo, etc…

The environment should feel:
collaborative, supportive, diverse, refreshing, and stress-free

The key values for this event are:
process *over result*
asking questions *over finding solutions*
collaboration *over competition*
expression *over application*
detail *over scale*

The goal is to facilitate non-disciplinary and intersectional dialogues, and help people understand each other's mindset and practice. I want to cater to CMU students' and faculty's strong scholarly and creative interests, and provide tangible opportunities to challenge barriers that exist in and beyond the academic disciplines.

Incentives

At Carnegie Mellon, I admire how academically and professional driven people are, yet I also notice the existence of academic silos. Social groups often form based on which major students are in. Many students rarely realize the resources in other colleges, or develop relationships with faculty and staff. The separation of academic programs also often leads to biases between majors.

As a BXA student, I have benefited tremendously from my interdisciplinary education, and I believe the exploration across academic fields could be a valuable experience for everyone. In my opinion, interdisciplinary collaboration inspires knowledge, courage, and empathy. It invites closer attention to the different ways people think. The skills and understanding gained through interdisciplinary collaboration can also benefit dialogues that challenge barriers outside the academic realm. By providing a foundation of trust and a common vocabulary, the crossing of disciplines can serve as the first step towards more nuanced conversations that address social and political differences.

With rich academic resources and an existing commitment to interdisciplinarity and diversity, Carnegie Mellon has a wonderful foundation for an event like the Non-Disciplinary Festival. There are many interdisciplinary spaces on campus such as BXA, IDeAte, the SHS program, ETC, STUDIO for Creative Inquiry, and Center for the Arts in Society. There are also grants dedicated to this cause such as SURG/CW, ProSEED, and CS+X [DRAMA]. Upon this foundation, I envision my project as an attempt to **decentralize** the institutional effort to bring together different talents, by providing an open, informal, festival-like platform to celebrate unconventional, exploratory teamwork.

Programming

Scheduling — 24hr Time Span

Friday night
- **kick-off**
- **ice breakers** — *games, <u>example link 1</u>, <u>example link 2</u> (inspired by conditional design practices in class taught by Prof. Golan Levin)*
- **group forming** — *every team is required to consist of three strangers from three distinct academic disciplines*
- **guided ideation** — *student volunteers guide each group in their project ideation process, providing inspirations and tips for interdisciplinary communication, while challenging people to think outside the box*

Saturday during the day
- **work period**
- **required daily process documentation** — *every team is required to document their process on a website (Medium, or a custom site made for this event)*
- **panels** — *local professionals, professors, and students share experience in interdisciplinary fields*
- **10-min faculty joint talks** — *asking two professors from different fields to give a 10-minute talk together on a topic they decide on themselves*

Saturday evening
- **exhibition**
- **awards** — *unlimited number of awards; teams can nominate each other for self-defined awards*
- **closing**

Organizational Structure

director (me): oversee the entire operation, secure funding, communicate with community or external partners, marketing
associate directors (graduate students + undergraduate students): logistical preparations, marketing
student volunteers: provide guidance to participants during the two weekends of the festival, marketing

* director and associate directors collaborate to plan the festival and develop visions for future
** titles are subject to change

Participants

- Ideally >200 people
- any person on Carnegie Mellon University campus
  - emphasis on underclassmen students (I think an event like this can encourage them to think earlier and deeper about their choice of major)

Potential Speakers

- **Professors** at CMU and Pitt
  - Stephanie Murray, Carrie Hagan, William Alba, David Kosbie, John Mackey, Roger Dannenberg, Golan Levin, etc.
- **Katherine Ye**, current PhD student at CMU School of Computer Science, organizer of <u>Antidisciplinarathon</u>, which is an inspiration for this project
- **Nathen Martin**, the CEO of Deeplocal, a Pittsburgh innovative studio of creatives, marketers, strategists, technologists, engineers (mechanical, electrical, robotic, and software) and artists; has long-standing ties with CMU's STUDIO for Creative Inquiry
- **Mentors from AlphaLab**, a Pittsburgh incubator for tech startups

Preparation

Year One (my senior year)

research
- study the transition from Carnegie Institute of Technology to Carnegie Mellon University
- study the history of different colleges at Carnegie Mellon
- study the history of interdisciplinary programs (HCII, BXA, IDeATe, etc.)

interview with professors
- their opinion on this particular initiative
- their personal experience with interdisciplinary collaboration and interdisciplinary education
- their reasoning behind the design of courses and curriculums in their field
- why do some disciplines give out problem sets instead of projects in their assignments?
- why do grading schemes differ across academic programs?

pilot festival
I am envisioning the pilot festival to only take a few hours. Instead of making a full project, groups are only asked to present an idea and possibly a demo in the end. Similar to the actual event, the pilot is focused on dialogues and thinking process, rather than the final product.
- pilot within the BXA department
- pilot with freshmen
- pilot with graduate students

iterative design
- review and deepen mission statement
- determine scale to measure success of the event
- study how to provide proper guidance for different kinds of people in the context of interdisciplinary collaboration

team formation
- find like-minded students (undergrads and grads) to join this initiative and form leadership board

marketing
- publicize to faculty, staff, undergrad students, and graduate students across the campus

Year Two (my fifth year)

continue marketing
- publicize to faculty, staff, undergrad students, and graduate students across the campus

full-scale event on campus
- early in the fall
- details were to be determined by results from Year One
- post-festival evaluation report

continuity consideration
- prepare new leadership
- find a home for this project in an existing organization or administrative office on campus

Support and Sustainability

Support from the BXA Department

Dr. Carrie Hagan from the BXA department is my advisor for this project. If I were to be admitted, the BXA Office is willing to provide institutional support and guidance.

I see the BXA department to be a potential home for this Festival. The faculty and students in BXA share my vision and have extensive experience with interdisciplinary thinking. I would recruit my fellow students at BXA to be organizers and volunteers for the pilot and full-scale Festivals. They would also be ideal candidates for future leadership positions.

Other Potential Community Partners

- **Center for the Arts in Society**
- **STUDIO for Creative Inquiry** — CFA research space dedicated to interdisciplinary learning, dialogue and research
- **Center for Diversity and Inclusion** — Academic discipline is only one way of measuring diversity. By collaborating with the Center for Diversity and Inclusion, I hope the dialogues in this event can extend to personal story and identity, instead of being limited to addressing differences in academics.
- **The Science and Humanities Scholars Program**
- **IDeATe**
- **ScottyLabs** — student-run, interdisciplinary organization that plans TartanHacks
- **Graduate Student Assembly** — Katherine Ye, a main inspirator for this event, has agreed to help publicize and/or co-sponsor by finding resources through the Graduate Student Assembly

Potential Sources of Funding

- BXA departmental support
- ProSEED/Simon Initiative Seed Grant
- Graduate Student Assembly / GuSH Crosswalk Seed Grant (if I were to have graduate students as co-sponsors/co-organizers)

- <u>Frank-Ratchye Fund for Art @ the Frontier</u>
- CS+X [Drama]

Budget Estimation for a 200 people event ~ $6050

($7 per person per meal on average) x (2 meals) x (200 participates) = $2800
$400 Drinks and snacks
$50 posters and flyers
($8 per participant T-shirts) x 200 + ($20 per volunteer T-shirts) x 30 = $2200
$300 speakers
$300 prizes

Inspiration and Experience

Antidisciplinarathon
In the summer of 2017, Katherine Ye, a current PhD student at CMU organized an event called "Antidisciplinarathon" in the Bay Area. She invited professionals in many different fields to make creative projects, and the products of their collaborations were wonderfully diverse, innovative, and thought-provoking. I was extremely inspired by this alternative form of "hackathon" which emphasized dialogues and thinking process. My project, the Non-Disciplinary Festival, is an adaptation of Antidisciplinarathon, but it is different in that it welcomes everyone to participate, not just those with expertise. I believe everyone is an expert of their own experience and that everyone has something to express.
Katherine has personally approved my adaptation of her idea and agreed to provide guidance and support with resources in her graduate student network.

Edinburgh Festival Fringe
The Edinburgh Festival Fringe is a performance art festival that supports adventurous and exploratory artists. It encourages the crossover of mediums and contents, and gathers talents from all over the world. Learning from this festival, I envision my project to also be a celebration of diversity, creativity, and removal of boundaries.
In fact, Pittsburgh has its own version of <u>Fringe Festival</u>, which I plan to attend in April.

Stever Open-Mic
In high school, I often went to this restaurant called <u>Al Taller</u> for open mic events. It was a very instrumental experience to my teenage years. After coming to CMU, I missed it a lot, so I organized an open-mic night in Stever with my house fellow Ashley Grice in the fall semester of my freshman year. We had students performing spoken words, rap, storytelling, music, etc. It was a super fun experience for me seeing the wonderful and often surprising talent of my peers. It was also my first time organizing an event at CMU. With my Fifth Year Scholar project, I hope I can bring people together again.