The task group on Interdisciplinary Research (IDR) will develop strategies to prioritize collaboration and build capacity for the CBE community to collaborate effectively on research within CBE, across the UW campus, and with off-campus partners. We undertake this in recognition of the value of IDR for addressing complex topics and challenges, advancing new knowledge, providing transferrable skills for academic and non-academic career tracks, and engaging the priorities of community partners for greater and more equitable impact.

We adhere to the NSF’s definition of IDR as “a mode of research by teams or individuals, that integrates information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts, and/or theories from two or more disciplines or bodies of specialized knowledge to advance fundamental understanding or to solve problems whose solutions are beyond the scope of a single discipline or area of research practice.” In addition, we recognize that IDR in CBE includes different methodologies (e.g., action research; historical research), as well as different scales, from an individual employing multiple disciplines in their work, to collaborative research with private-sector, public-sector, and community partners.

Our research approach is grounded in the key constraints of time/capacity, and the broader goal of developing robust processes for continued conversation and alignment that can extend beyond the Task Group’s charge.

To inform goals, strategies and metrics of success, we will ask the following research questions:

1. What IDR is being done in CBE?
2. What are drivers and barriers of IDR for CBE (both internal and external forces)?
3. What are successful models of IDR support that CBE could learn from (at other units, universities and institutions)?

Our approach includes assessing previous inventories, e.g., Marina Alberti’s efforts, Carnegie self-assessment, Urban@UW; internal/external surveys; interviews with key stakeholders inside/outside CBE, including related Task Groups; and assessment of literature and other materials.