

Interdisciplinary University Studies Major (IDSC)

I. Overview

The Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary University Studies will be offered to undergraduate students across each of the colleges and schools. Students enrolled in the proposed degree must choose to combine two or three concentrated fields of study from a minimum of two different colleges/schools, complete required structured interdisciplinary coursework and additional supporting coursework, work alongside a career development counselor and complete a capstone experience. The option to create a unique degree will enable students to seek professional careers in diverse occupational fields. Additionally, the IDSC will enable students to successfully integrate their undergraduate education, disciplinary coursework, and real world experiences.

II. Purpose

The IDSC format provides students with the flexibility to combine coherent areas of study that are of special interest and combine courses that are not possible through existing degree plans. Students will earn a Bachelor of Science Degree in Interdisciplinary Studies. A goal of the program is to create greater accessibility of concentrations and minors to identified students (see section V).

Students declaring an IDSC must choose to combine three 12-hour concentrated fields of study or two 18-hour concentrated fields of study from a minimum of two different colleges/schools (a total of 36 hours across two colleges/schools).

III. Academic Program Objectives

1. Students will pursue an individualized academic degree in a manner that best suits their intellectual and career interests.
2. Students will develop an approved proposal for their degree that identifies the intellectual framework for the area of study and set the academic course requirements under the advisement of academic and career advisors.
3. Students will complete a capstone experience, including a senior thesis, professional internship, service learning project or other individualized study, to complement their coursework. Whenever possible, students will draw from co-curricular experiences as a supplement to the academic curriculum.

IV. Rationale

Independent interdisciplinary majors provide considerable flexibility for combining the study of several academic disciplines to create a single major resulting in a practical and employable degree. Interdisciplinary degrees with a distinct focus on career development allow students to experience greater confidence when making individual career choices.

Formed in 1995, with the support of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates in the Research University outlines in its 1998 report

several key skills and experiences all college graduates need for postgraduate success. When identifying the importance of interdisciplinary opportunities, the Commission indicates students often feel discouraged by the choices in existing majors that do not suit their interests and those students are able to successfully fit those interests into an interdisciplinary format (p. 23). Placing a strong emphasis on capstone experiences such as internships, the Commission advocates such experiences provide useful, often interdisciplinary, learning and real-life problem solving (p.18). Additionally, the Commission recommends an emphasis on oral and written communication across the curriculum, citing that communication skills should be integrated with subject matter (p. 24).

According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) annual report (2008), the most desirable skills sought by employers include Communication, Initiative, Flexibility/Adaptability, Computer and Strategic Planning. The IDSC pedagogy requires students to complete supplemental coursework outside of their major concentrations that focuses on fostering these academic and professional skills. Additionally, employers cite communication skills, workplace skills, and experience as the three areas in which recent college graduates fail to demonstrate competence. A fundamental part of the IDSC curriculum includes a capstone experience where students are required to integrate knowledge and skills acquired through their courses into an approved internship, service learning or senior thesis project.

The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U, 2007) indicates that young Americans change jobs an average of 10 times in the two decades following college (p. 15). Employers have expressed an urgent need for graduates who are broadly prepared, having completed an expansive and versatile education experience as opposed to narrow training within a specific field (p. 17). Findings from executive employer studies (Hart, 2006) indicate colleges and universities should place more emphasis on the following skills: integrative learning [the ability to apply knowledge and skills to real-world settings through internships] (73%); the ability to effectively communicate orally and in writing (73%); critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills (73%); the ability to locate, organize, and evaluate information from multiple sources (70%) (p. 2). With a strong emphasis on successful completion of both a capstone experience and coursework in oral and advanced written communication as well as computer competency, IDSC students will graduate with the necessary experience and critical thinking skills to be marketable and multidimensional in today's global economy.

Student Base

Students in good academic standing (minimum 2.0 cumulative GPA or a 2.2 in the previous term) who have completed no less than 30 credit hours and no more than 90 hours are eligible for the IDSC degree program. To declare this major, students must first successfully complete UNIV 2190, Foundations of Interdisciplinary University Studies, with a grade of "C" or higher.

The IDSC degree is designed for students who want to pursue interdisciplinary studies and custom-design a program of study to meet their personal and career goals. The following student groups are identified as best served through an Interdisciplinary Degree format:

- Students with a desirable career that requires a unique combination of academic disciplines;
- Students unable to locate an academic major of interest to them;

- Students who develop different interests who would be unable to complete all requirements for a new degree in a reasonable period of time or who are unable to transfer because of restrictions.

V. Curriculum

The proposed IDSC curriculum consists of 36 credit hours completed across two or three concentrated areas of study. The concentrated areas must be from a minimum of two different colleges. The proposed curriculum (below) includes the following courses:

Auburn University Core Curriculum	41 hours
Introductory Course to Interdisciplinary Studies	3 hours
Major Course Hours	36 hours
Capstone Experience	3 hours
Interdisciplinary Supporting Coursework	8-9 hours
Electives	28-29 hours
Minimum Number of Required Hours	120

At least 20 of the 36 hours in the major must be at the 3000 level or higher. Within a particular concentration, at least 12 out of the 18 hours (for two concentrations) or 9 out of the 12 hours (for three concentrations) must be from courses offered by that College or School. The remaining courses may be chosen from closely related courses in another College or School. Courses in the major that are outside the College or School of the concentration areas must be at the 3000 level or higher.

No class that counts toward the IDSC major may also be applied toward a minor. A minor may be pursued by using elective hours.

UNIV 2190, Foundations of Interdisciplinary University Studies (3 credit hours) - New Course

This introductory course examines the fundamental concepts of interdisciplinary theory with a strong emphasis on career exploration. Students will be taught basic theories of interdisciplinary thinking and conceptualize their own interdisciplinary goals. In addition to completing personal career assessments, students will also produce a written prospectus as a primary product of the course.

The written prospectus (detailed plan of study) defines the intended major and outlines the curriculum. The student must demonstrate the relationship between the chosen fields and how the combination relates to the student's intended educational and career goals. All students are required to design a unique program of study and identify assessment plans in order for it to be approved. Students are also required to demonstrate feasibility of their degree into an established job field or graduate program of study, with the assistance of a Career Development Counselor.

UNIV 4980, Interdisciplinary Capstone Experience (3 credit hours)-New Course

Students will complete a capstone course in which they apply their knowledge of the interdisciplinary discipline to a service-learning, professional internship or thesis project. The capstone project should adequately recognize all academic areas and concentrations students have completed as part of the

degree.

8-9 hours of Interdisciplinary supporting coursework

In addition to the required major and Interdisciplinary coursework, students must also complete the following:

- **3 hours of Oral Communication**
Students can satisfy this requirement with *COMM 1000, Introduction to Public Speaking* or an additional upper-level course with an emphasis on oral communication.
- **2-3 hours of Computer Competency**
Students can satisfy this requirement with *COMP 1000, Personal Computer Applications* or an additional upper-level course with an emphasis on technological and information literacy.
- **3 hours of Written Communication**
Students can satisfy this requirement with any course beyond ENGL 1120 with an emphasis on writing. Courses that departments define or develop as part of the Writing Initiative would be viable choices.

Students desiring an IDSC degree must obtain approval of their individual degree plan of study from existing department Faculty Advisors in the concentrated areas selected as well as an overall Faculty Mentor. The Faculty Advisor for the concentration would be the Minor Advisor if a faculty member fills this role in a department. If there is no Faculty Advisor for the minor, the concentration will be approved by the faculty member who serves as undergraduate program director, if one is available for the concentration. If there is neither a minor advisor, nor an undergraduate program director who are faculty members, the student will seek approval from the department head/chair (or the Associate Dean for Academics in a School or College that has no departments).

For subsequent substitutions, after the initial degree plan is approved, students must receive approval of the appropriate Faculty Advisor (as outlined above) within the affected concentration, the Faculty Mentor, and the Assistant Provost for Undergraduate Studies.

VI. Major Competencies

Students who complete the Interdisciplinary University Studies Major should acquire the following knowledge and skills:

1. Understanding of Interdisciplinary Theory and Application

Students are granted broader academic freedom to pursue their degree in ways that best suit their own intellectual interests and apply them to the workplace and society. Students will learn how to approach issues from a range of perspectives, enabling them to develop a comprehensive understanding of complex subject matter.

2. Critical Thinking Skills

Through two new courses, the Introductory Course and the Capstone Experience Course, students will learn how interdisciplinary studies integrate into their chosen academic field using disciplinary and interdisciplinary thinking.

3. Individual Career Exploration

IDSC students will work alongside representatives from Auburn's Career Development Services to conduct feasibility studies of their proposed degree upon graduation. Through working with a career counselor, students will identify possible internship and career opportunities.

4. Capstone Experience

Students will be provided with an opportunity to apply their knowledge through a capstone experience. This experience will place an emphasis on critical, reflective thinking and personal and professional responsibility. Students will demonstrate this knowledge by creating a unique opportunity to (1) integrate either theoretical concepts or practical application into a capstone experience or (2) an interdisciplinary research project.

5. **Communication Competencies:** Students completing the IDSC degree must demonstrate individual communication competencies. The required communication coursework is concerned with improving students' abilities to communicate in a variety of ways, as well as with expanding knowledge of how others communicate.

a. Oral Communication

Students pursuing an Interdisciplinary Degree must demonstrate effective oral communication skills. Effective oral communication skills include the ability to generate and deliver messages using language appropriate to purpose, occasion, and audience. As globally competent communicators, students will learn how to translate ideas into coherent messages for diverse audiences. Satisfactory completion of this requirement includes enrolling in either COMM 1000 or oral communication supporting coursework.

b. Written Communication

Students pursuing an Interdisciplinary University Degree must demonstrate that they have developed the ability to communicate ideas and argument effectively in writing by successfully completing advanced writing assignments. Satisfactory completion of this requirement includes enrolling in an advanced writing course (beyond ENGL 1120).

c. Computer Literacy

In addition to oral and written communication, students must also demonstrate the ability to use computer-based technology in communicating, solving problems and acquiring information.

Students pursuing an Interdisciplinary University Degree are required to enroll in a computer science related course (beyond what is required for a specific concentration).

***All IDSC coursework, including 8-9 hours of supporting coursework (Oral and Written Communication, Computer Literacy) and the Introductory and Capstone Courses must be completed with a grade of "C" or better.*

VII. Administration and Governance

The Office of Undergraduate Studies will provide central administrative oversight to the Interdisciplinary Degree program. Essentially, the office will serve as a point of contact for Associate Deans, Faculty Mentors and the Faculty Oversight Committee.

The Office of Undergraduate Studies will be responsible for:

- Providing students with an Academic Advisor, accessible through the *Cater Center*;
- Providing the UNIV 2190 and coordinating UNIV 4980 courses;
- Approval of student Faculty Mentors;
- Final Approval of students' plans of study;

The Office of Undergraduate Studies will work closely with the Faculty Oversight Committee to serve as a clearing house for course demand, enrollment and academic oversight. The Faculty Oversight Committee and the Assistant Provost for Undergraduate Studies must approve any proposed changes to the IDSC curriculum before a request for IDSC curriculum change is sent to the University Curriculum Committee.

Faculty Oversight Committee

The Faculty Oversight Committee will consist of one faculty representative currently serving on each College or School's Curriculum Committee (with the exception of the Harrison School of Pharmacy, the School of Veterinary Medicine and the School of Nursing). In the event that a College or School does not have a curriculum committee, the Senate Rules Committee will send forward a nominee to the Associate Provost of Undergraduate Studies for approval. Members of the Faculty Oversight Committee are responsible for reporting Interdisciplinary enrollment back to their respective colleges and to prepare reports for the University Curriculum Committee.

This Committee will be responsible for:

- Preparing a formal report to be presented to the Curriculum Committee each semester (fall and spring);
- Serving as a contact for the Faculty Mentors;
- Communicating with Faculty Advisors in each student's chosen area of concentration;
- Reviewing students' progress reports towards degree completion ;

Advising Plan

IDSC Students will receive academic advising through the provided Academic Advisors within the Cater Center, and will receive career and capstone advising from their identified Faculty Mentor as well as Career Development Services representatives.

Role of Faculty Mentor

All Interdisciplinary Degree students are required to have a Faculty Mentor who agrees to supervise their individually designed major. Upon completion of UNIV 2190, students should have identified an approved Faculty Mentor. This individual agrees to serve as an evaluator and advisor throughout the student's Interdisciplinary Degree Program and assists students with completing a plan of study.

Criteria for Faculty Mentors

- An Interdisciplinary Degree Faculty Mentor must be a full-time member of the Auburn University faculty with a rank of Assistant, Associate, or Full Professor or;
- In some cases, the only person on campus who has a good knowledge of a particular area of study may be an instructor or academic staff member. In such cases, it may be necessary to verify the staff member's ability to serve as a Faculty Advisor to identify if co-sponsorship from a qualifying faculty member is necessary. A recommendation for instructors or staff members to serve as a Faculty Mentor must be made by the Faculty Oversight Committee before the mentorship request is sent to the Office of Undergraduate Studies for approval.

Responsibilities of Faculty Mentors

- The primary responsibility of the Interdisciplinary Degree Faculty Mentor is to counsel students, providing feedback and support regarding a student's plan of study; assisting students with identifying academic resources, and recommending possible paths of inquiry or experience.
- Faculty Mentors are responsible for assisting students with submitting their plan of study to Faculty Advisors in each of the chosen concentrations for approval.
- Faculty Mentors are responsible for meeting with students on a regular basis (at least three times per semester) to discuss the student's progress towards their Interdisciplinary Degree.
- Faculty Mentors are also responsible for assisting students in planning capstone experiences or internships using the UNIV 4980 course designation.

VIII. Resources

The program will be supported through the Office of Undergraduate Studies. No additional resources are required from academic units. The Office of Undergraduate Studies will provide course "buyouts" for faculty who teach the Introductory Course.

IX. Evaluation

This program will be evaluated through (1) the use of electronic portfolios (e-portfolios), (2) Introductory and Capstone course evaluations, (3) annual student surveys, (4) enrollment management and (5) feedback from both advisors and faculty mentors.

1. E-portfolios promote integrated learning through allowing students to demonstrate connections among both their chosen areas of concentration and the required interdisciplinary coursework. A requirement for successful completion of the program, students will submit an e-portfolio containing samples of work completed throughout the degree. The e-portfolios will be evaluated by the Faculty Oversight Committee using rubrics that will be developed during the first year and modified subsequently or as deemed necessary by this committee.
2. Course evaluations will be conducted in both the foundations and capstone courses. The course evaluations will be used during the first year to adapt course materials if necessary, develop course assignments and identify possible areas students may need additional campus resources to assist with individual plans of study.
3. In addition to course evaluations, students will also be asked to participate in an online program evaluation at several points during the completion of their degree. The online survey will measure satisfaction levels with faculty mentors, supplemental interdisciplinary coursework, career development resources and academic advisors. The survey results will be evaluated by the Faculty Oversight Committee.
4. The IDSC Degree will be evaluated based on enrollment figures for both the UNIV 2190 and UNIV 4980 courses. Members of the Faculty Oversight Committee will be responsible for providing enrollment reports back to their respective college or school.
5. Interviews will be conducted annually among faculty mentors and minor advisors to assess the IDSC process. Collecting qualitative data will enable the Faculty Oversight Committee to identify possible resources to better assist mentors and advisors, assess training materials and identify overall satisfaction levels.

X. Sample Plans of Study: Sample plans are available upon request.

References

Association of American Colleges and Universities. *College Learning for the New Global Century: A Report for the National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America's Promise*. Washington, DC: Author, 2007.

Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates in the Research University. *Reinventing Undergraduate Education: A Blueprint for America's Research Universities*. State University of New York–Stony Brook, 1998.

Hart, P. *How Should Colleges Prepare Students to Succeed in Today's Global Economy?* Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2006.

National Association of Colleges and Employers. *NACE Job Outlook 2008*. Bethlehem, PA: Author, 2008.

The following list of available minors is presented to demonstrate possible options for interdisciplinary concentration combinations.

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE

AGRIBUSINESS MINOR
AGRONOMY AND SOILS MINOR
ANIMAL SCIENCES MINOR
ENTOMOLOGY MINOR
FISHERIES AND ALLIED AQUACULTURES MINOR
AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP STUDIES
NATURAL RESOURCES ECONOMICS AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY MINOR
PLANT PATHOLOGY MINOR
POULTRY SCIENCE MINOR
RURAL AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MINOR

COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE, DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

NO MINORS OFFERED

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

ACCOUNTANCY MINOR
AVIATION MANAGEMENT MINOR
CERTIFICATE OF BUSINESS
ECONOMICS MINOR
FINANCE MINOR
INFORMATION ASSURANCE MINOR
INFORMATION SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT
INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS MINOR
MARKETING MINOR
SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT MINOR
TECHNICAL SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT
BUSINESS MINOR
BUSINESS-ENGINEERING-TECHNOLOGY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

ADULT EDUCATION MINOR
EXERCISE SCIENCE MINOR
OFFICE SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT MINOR
SPORT COACHING MINOR

GINN COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

COMPUTER SCIENCE MINOR
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY MINOR

COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY STUDIES MINOR
INTERNATIONAL MINOR IN HUMAN SCIENCES

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

AFRICANA STUDIES MINOR
ANTHROPOLOGY MINOR
ART HISTORY MINOR
CLASSICS MINOR
COMMUNICATION MINOR
DANCE MINOR
ENGLISH MINOR
FRENCH MINOR
GERMAN MINOR
HISTORY MINOR
ITALIAN MINOR
MEDIÉVAL & RENAISSANCE/EARLY MODERN STUDIES
MUSIC MINOR
PHILOSOPHY MINOR
POLITICAL SCIENCE MINOR
PSYCHOLOGY MINOR
RELIGIOUS STUDIES MINOR
SOCIAL WORK MINOR
SPANISH MINOR
TECHNICAL AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION MINOR
THEATRE MINOR

PROVOST'S OFFICE

LEADERSHIP MINOR
SUSTAINABILITY STUDIES MINOR
WOMEN'S STUDIES

COLLEGE OF SCIENCE AND MATH

MATHEMATICS MINOR
PHYSICS MINOR