INDIVIDUAL MAJOR

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The Center for Integrative Studies (CIS) works with students who design and carry out Individual Majors that intentionally integrate diverse methods, experiences, learning styles, subjects, and on- or off-campus resources. The goal of the CIS is to enhance the coherence of students’ educational experience by encouraging them to make meaningful connections between their academic and co-curricular learning and helping them to build bridges between the college and other communities.

The Individual Major

The CIS is the academic home for students pursuing self-designed, integrative majors. Students propose a sequence of courses, seminars, independent studies, or experiential learning as the means of pursuing an individual major. Proposals must include:

1. A description of the proposed area or topic of study.
2. A list of 11–12 courses and other learning experiences, with an explanation of how each contributes to the major.
3. A set of questions that will guide studies in the major, including broader questions in the disciplines supporting the major and specific questions related to narrower topics of the major.
4. Initial plans for 2–3 potential senior integrative projects
5. A summary of the student’s preparation to carry out the proposed major, and a justification of the major as a coherent, integrative academic plan.

Each proposal must have the support of a faculty academic advisor. The coherence, depth, and feasibility of each proposal are evaluated in a Final Review Consultation (FRC) convened by the CIS, after which the proposal is forwarded to a faculty committee that gives final approval or returns the proposal for further revision. At the end of the senior year, the student’s work in the major is presented to a CIS faculty certification committee for review. Proposals for individual majors may be submitted any time during the sophomore year and the first part of the junior year.

Recent individual majors include: Archaeology: Culture and Methodology; Nonprofit Mission and Management; Technology Innovation and Civic Development; Disability Studies; International Development; Criminalistics; African Identities in Media and Development; Cognitive Neuroscience: Cells to Systems; Photographic Theory; Global Health Diplomacy; Digital Art and Animation; Studies in Pre-Architecture and Sustainability; Performance Technology and Design; Film Analysis and Criticism; International Human Rights; Sports and Activities Administration; Media and Public Relations: Marketing to Multiple Audiences; English Language Learners in the Elementary Classroom; Politics, Economics and Philosophy.

The Web Portfolio

Students with individual majors create and maintain a public web portfolio that demonstrates the integration and coherence of the major. Its web-based structure allows students to make explicit links among the examples of their own work as well as to outside sites of public discussion related to the topic of the major. The portfolio also allows students to track and reflect on their intellectual development as they complete their studies. The web portfolio is presented to the faculty certification committee with the list of completed courses and integrative senior project at the end of the major.

For specific requirements for the individual major or for information about other activities of the Center for Integrative Studies, please contact the director or assistant director.

Intended Learning Outcomes for the Major

All individual majors are eligible for the Ken Bonde Memorial Award. Students are nominated by their faculty advisors in the CIS; awards are determined by a committee chaired by the Director. More information about the award is available on the CIS website.

Courses

Integrative Senior Project

All senior integrative projects include work during both semesters of the senior year. Students determine the topic and scope of their project in consultation with their advisor at the beginning of the fall semester. Senior project plans describe the anticipated final product and the basis for its evaluation, as well as a research plan to support or contextualize the project. Whether the final product is a traditional research paper, a performance, a portfolio of essays, or a panel presentation, it must have a clear grounding in academic research.

For the fall semester students choose a level III course or other experience closely related to the topics and activities of the major and senior project, or, in consultation with their faculty advisor, may enroll in IS 391 Senior Project I, an independent course graded on a P/N basis. Enrollment in IS 391 is by permission of the CIS. During the spring semester, all students must enroll in IS 392 Senior Project II, a graded course which comprises the completion and public presentation of the senior project. Enrollment in IS 392 is by permission of the CIS, upon evidence that the basic elements of the required web portfolio are in place. A brief description of the student’s major and senior project appears on the official transcript.

Students may also register independent study (IS 298 Independent Study), independent research (IS 398 Independent Research), or internships (IS 294 Academic Internship, IS 394 Academic Internship) through the CIS, if the supervising faculty member advises that as the appropriate course designation.

IS 294: Academic Internship

In consultation with their CIS advisor, students may register for this semester course, which is P/N. This optional course is generally used for an internship linked to the individual major.

IS 298: Independent Study

In consultation with their CIS advisor, students may register for this semester course, which can be graded or P/N. This optional course is generally used for research and other preparation for the work.
IS 391: Senior Project I
Students who are pursuing an individual major, in consultation with their CIS advisor, may register for this fall semester course, which is graded P/N. This optional course is generally used for research and other preparation for the work planned for the spring semester. Whether students are enrolled in IS 391 or another approved level III course or experience, senior project plans must be submitted to CIS by the end of September.
Prerequisite: permission of the CIS.

IS 392: Senior Project II
Students with individual majors may register for their senior integrative projects in each semester of the senior year. The first semester, which is generally used for research and other preparation in consultation with the student's adviser, receives a P/N evaluation; the second semester, which includes a final presentation of the project, receives a grade. A brief description of the student's major and senior project appears on the transcript.

IS 394: Academic Internship
In consultation with their CIS advisor, students may register for this semester course, which is P/N. This optional course is generally used for an internship linked to the individual major.

IS 398: Independent Research
In consultation with their CIS advisor, students may register for this semester course, which can be graded or P/N. This optional course is generally used for research and other preparation for the work.