

## **B.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies Proposal History**

- A Letter of Intent for a B.A. in Liberal Studies was introduced by Dean Amy Gort at UCAP on March 24, 2016. UCAP voted to approve development of the full proposal.
- A faculty committee was convened in June 2016 to develop the proposal comprising David Lapakko, Eric Buffalohead, Milda Hedblom and Nancy Fischer.
- The faculty committee met four times and has collaborated on drafts electronically.
- A full proposal for a B.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies was submitted to UCAP on October 27, 2016. A revised proposal was reviewed on November 17, 2016 and was approved by UCAP to proceed for AAC, Faculty Senate, and full faculty approval.
- AAC had a first reading of the proposal on December 5, 2016, a second reading on January 9, 2017, and approved the revised proposal on January 9, 2017.
- Faculty Senate had a discussion of the proposal on December 14, 2016, reviewed the AAC-approved proposal on January 11, 2017, and voted to recommend the proposal for approval by the full faculty on January 11, 2017.

[Click Here to Jump Down to Excerpts from AAC and Senate Meeting Minutes](#)

## **Proposal Refinement in Response to Committee Feedback**

- [Proposal revisions based on UCAP feedback on October 27, 2016](#)
- [Proposal revisions based on feedback from AAC on December 5, 2016 and Faculty Senate on December 14, 2016](#)

## COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - EXCERPTS

Jump to:

[AAC 12-05-16 MINUTES](#)

[AAC 01-09-17 MINUTES](#)

[FACULTY SENATE 12-14-16 MINUTES](#)

[FACULTY SENATE 01-11-17 MINUTES](#)

[CAP 03-25-16 MINUTES](#)

[UCAP 10-27-16 MINUTES](#)

### AAC 12-05-16 MINUTES

[AAC 12-05-16 Agenda Packet](#)

#### **1<sup>st</sup> R New Major Proposal: BA in Interdisciplinary Studies, p. 12**

Dean Gort presented the proposal and explained that it was developed with three types of students in mind: 1) students seeking to build a major Augsburg does not currently offer (e.g. the recently approved student-designed majors “Astrophysics Science and Technology” and “Arts Administration”); 2) students who have completed significant coursework in an offered major but could not meet the major’s requirements (most commonly STEM); and 3) adult transfer students seeking credit for significant academic work completed prior to their time at Augsburg. This proposal would meet the specific situations of these types of students, and the design team believes that this flexibility gives the program integrity. The structured process will ensure close work with faculty, and institutional assessment, built in the “major learning outcomes” section on the checklist will demonstrate learning and skill development.

Concerns/questions expressed by committee members:

- How will the title read on a student’s transcript? Tom Kelsey confirmed that it would most likely read “Interdisciplinary Studies” with the student’s chosen “major name.”
- How do graduate programs and employers perceive general or unconventional degree titles? For some fields, the degree is very important and faculty should advise accordingly. In other fields, the courses listed on a transcript are more important than the degree,
- To what extent would this give students an easy option, or a way to bypass rigorous coursework? One example of misuse would be if a student used this program to get a “finance” degree without complete study of quantitative skills. Amy noted that faculty advising and the required Dean’s signature provide layers of oversight that should prevent “bypass” situations.

- The current student-designed major proposal process asks student to research programs offered at other colleges and universities. Committee members noted that this practice has been valuable and pushes students to document their process and show what programs guided their choices in developing a course plan. Asking students to review comparable programs could also help prevent a “bypass” situation.
- The current student-designed major proposal process also asks students to provide a narrative explaining how they developed their course plan. Committee members agreed that in the new process, students should be asked to explain how they chose their concentrations and justify the connection.
- The checklist includes two separate spaces to list the capstone course/experience and the keystone course, while the catalog copy blurs the distinction with “capstone and/or keystone” and “capstone/keystone.” Amy noted that this was intended to reflect that not all offered majors have one or the other. Committee members requested that the catalog clarify the difference between the two.
- Are all faculty prepared to advise students through this program? Special training could be beneficial. It was noted that not all faculty would know how to advise the portfolio of learning experiences. Members requested that some guidelines or minimum requirements be developed for the portfolio, and questioned if completion will be required for graduation and how this might be tracked.

**Tabled.** The proposal will return for a second reading in January.

## **AAC 01-09-17 MINUTES**

### AAC 01-09-17 Agenda Packet

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> R New Major Proposal: BA in Interdisciplinary Studies, p. 34**

After AAC’s first reading of the proposal (12-05-16) Dean Gort brought the proposal for a reading at Faculty Senate on 12-14-16 . Changes made to the proposal are described on page 34 of the agenda packet.

Points noted in discussion:

- The popularity of this major is unknown. An eye will be kept to the scalability to make sure that faculty advisors’ time and work is manageable.
- The AU program will likely “box up” possibilities to show students how they may approach certain concentration areas with AU courses.
- On the checklist, students will be asked to choose a minimum of three major learning outcomes. This addition will be made in the final proposal.

- By the end of the academic year a portfolio template will be finished. It will guide students and faculty advisors in completing this aspect of the major.

Concerns raised by committee members:

- Some comparable programs as noted on page 39 include a strategic core or required “bookend” courses. Such requirements could give Augsburg students a methodological background in interdisciplinary studies or provide more depth in the program. The subcommittee did consider creating new courses for the program, but left them out of the final proposal in order to provide flexibility to the three groups of students described in the proposal.
- Some members expressed concern that the major provides a degree route for students that are “barely squeaking by.” Dean Gort noted that the proposal is not intended to diminish rigor in an Augsburg education. Students will still be required to meet the institutional GPA requirement, and the major requires a minimum 24 credits of upper-division courses.
- Some commented that language on page 38, in the paragraph beginning “Last, this degree program...” presents the major in a negative light and could be rewritten.
- Some members were concerned that the new major would conflate two different types of students. At present, the student-designed major is most often used by highly-motivated students. A member argued that it would be a disservice to these students to ask them to use the new Interdisciplinary Studies model. Other members agreed and suggested that this is not a “one-size fits all” solution. The student-designed major should remain and allow creative, ambitious students the option to create their own degree with the high level of oversight offered by AAC.

Motion: Approve the Interdisciplinary Studies major and maintain the student-designed major option. AAC agreed to task the planning group with reviewing the current student-designed major requirements and propose revisions to bring the process up to date. The motion carried unanimously. **MSC.**

## **FACULTY SENATE 12-14-16 MINUTES**

### **Interdisciplinary Studies Proposal**

See [Interdisciplinary Studies Proposal](#) and [AAC 12-5-16 draft minutes](#).

Dean Gort remained to discuss the proposal. The Senate reviewed the LOI for this proposal, then called “Liberal Studies,” in April 2016. AAC held a first reading of the new major proposal on 12-5. One application of the proposed degree is to replace the current student-designed major proposal process. Amy explained that the current process is too complex and asks too much of the student. However, AAC’s concern with the Interdisciplinary Studies proposal is that

with less oversight students would develop incoherent degrees. She noted that the portfolio described in the proposal is to be used for assessment, not as a means to evaluate and then permit a student to graduate.

Some Senators argued that there is a risk of incoherent majors, but a student would not developed an interdisciplinary major alone. The faculty advisor and Dean would provide the necessary oversight. It was noted that even offered degrees may not have “coherence” for every student. However, other Senators argued that one faculty and one Dean is not enough oversight. Should faculty go through training or have some kind of assistance to lead them through the process? Jen suggested that an additional signature could be required of the Department Chair or Program Director for each concentration. Senators agreed this would be a good compromise. A final concern raised was if AU students declare the major. Students using the Catalog / Course Descriptions will not know if courses are offered in the Day or AU schedule.

The Senate will wait call for a vote on the proposal until AAC offers a formal recommendation. Admissions has commented that this major would be very attractive for transfer students; they would be able to include it in advertising if approved in early winter. Senators questioned when exactly Admissions would need to know in order to recruit for Fall 2017.

## **FACULTY SENATE 01-11-17 MINUTES**

### **Interdisciplinary Studies Major**

See [Proposal](#) and [AAC 01-09-17 draft minutes](#)

Senate’s first reading of the proposal was in December 2016. AAC voted unanimously to approve the major on Jan. 9 on the condition that the self-designed major remain an option for students. Committee members made this recommendation in light of recent self-designed majors from highly-motivated, creative students seeking to craft their degree and choose a unique name. The Interdisciplinary Studies major will appear on transcripts as “Interdisciplinary Studies in X [and Y].” Senators agreed that AAC’s recommendation keeps doors open to students and is in line with the spirit of the proposal.

The following revisions will be made to the final proposal before it is brought to the full faculty:

- On the checklist, second page, students will be asked to list "at least one" course for the graduation skills.
- In the major requirements, page 1 of the proposal, the language "only include 4 credits of 100- or 200-level language courses" will be replaced with "only include 4 credits of 200-level language courses." This revision was recommended by Michael Kidd, Chair of Languages and Cross-Cultural Studies.

**The Senate voted to approve the proposal unanimously: 12 in favor of approval, 0 abstentions, 0 against. MSC.**

## **CAP 03-25-16 MINUTES**

### **Letter of Intent: Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies**

Amy Gort provided an overview of this proposal, which was initiated in response to students who are near-grads, but could not complete their programs, for a variety of reasons. The self-designed major process as currently structured is onerous, and can be discouraging for students. The question becomes, how do we meet the needs and passions of our students with a more flexible path to degree completion that is not within the traditional major. William noted that this degree path could benefit transfer students who come in with courses from a variety of institutions—this structure could help them pull together a program.

The Liberal Studies path would ask students to get depth in one area (5 of the 10 required courses), and the 5 remaining courses can be flexible. Ron Blankenship raised the issue of the language requirement—how would this work within the structure of the current proposal? Additionally, the faculty group will be asked to consider if this degree could be a BS degree—does the LS degree have to be a BA? What about a BFA?

There was general agreement that this degree could be a good solution for graduating students who otherwise might not be able to finish their degree. Dal Liddle noted that Liberal Studies degrees can carry a reputation as a higher education equivalent of the GED.

Advising for LS students would come from faculty members representing the concentration area. Strong advising will be key to helping students construct their degree program. If this program is approved, it was suggested that follow-up with LS graduates will be important to learn where the value lies (what do students end up doing upon completion?).

Amy noted in the AAC&U report, “It’s Not the Major” identifies communication skills and problem-solving skills are important results from a liberal arts education. Identifying these skills can be helpful to LS students talk about the value of their degree to potential employers. We want our students to be prepared for life, which goes against the common thinking that the major is most important. We should make sure our requirements reflect the appropriate goals for our students.

This proposal will not require additional resources.

## UCAP 10-27-16 MINUTES

### **Interdisciplinary Studies Proposal**

Amy Gort presented the Interdisciplinary Studies (IS) proposal—an update on the proposal formerly titled Liberal Studies that came to UCAP last spring. The current student-designed major process is quite onerous and students shy away from it due to its complexity. The revised program has been designed with serving students in mind. In particular, adult students would find this of interest because it would allow them to bring in courses of interest from other majors. It also has the strong potential to be helpful to transfer students, who may bring in courses from a few institutions, create a cohesive and meaningful major as they try to complete their degree.

The program requires 40 semester hour credits and six 300-400 level courses. Students could have one or two concentration areas, with one in a major field of study (at least 20 credit hours, with at least 12 in courses at or over the 300 level). Additionally, while the existing student-designed major requires a capstone project, the IS proposal might want to include a portfolio or capstone that would also be a way of assessing the quality of the work produced through this type of program.

The IS proposal does not add any new courses, and at this time the only additional resource envisioned is having a faculty advisor (perhaps one from each concentration in the student's program) who helps oversee the student's progression through the major. The identified outcomes in this proposal may be unrealistic—no major does all of what is stated (although it may be that the whole of the student's educational experience does).

While committee members saw the potential for this program to be attractive to Day--and AU students in particular--it was suggested that the wording be strengthened to articulate the depth of the learning to occur (e.g., specify the plan and the goal(s)). Perhaps a small sub-committee of AAC could be constructed to oversee/review student-designed majors.

Due to the assumed low financial this proposal might be able to go directly to AAC, with the committee's approval.

## **Interdisciplinary Studies Proposal Revisions for Feedback from UCAP 10-27-16**

### Interdisciplinary Studies Proposal

#### Draft 2, for UCAP Review

What is new in this draft?

- *The options for meeting the capstone and keystone requirements are clarified.* The faculty committee decided to name three different options that students could use to complete the capstone and keystone requirements. In some cases, students will be able to complete the major specific capstone/keystone course (the one course fulfills both capstone and keystone requirements). Students might also chose an internship, faculty mentored research, or an independent study capstone as a culminating capstone experience. In these cases, the students would need to complete KEY 490 to fulfill their keystone requirement.
- *Clarification that the Interdisciplinary Studies major is not intended to include all eight institutional learning outcomes.* The student and faculty advisor will select the outcomes that align with the planned courses.
- *Students in this major will have one faculty advisor.* The faculty committee discussed concerns that having multiple advisors can lead to inconsistent advising for the student and may place an undue burden on the student. Instead, the committee recommends having one faculty advisor and suggesting the student seek input from other faculty members in the process of developing the degree. Faculty members indicated that this arrangement often happens in practice for students with self-designed majors.
- *Interdisciplinary Studies majors will be approved by the faculty advisor and the appropriate Dean.* Having a secondary level of approval by the Dean will ensure that the degree components are represented in each major and to allow the collection of information about the degrees that are being developed.
- *Clarification that this degree will replace the self-designed major option currently in place.*
- *A draft major planning sheet is included.*

## **Interdisciplinary Studies Proposal Revisions for Feedback from AAC 12-05-16 and Faculty Senate on 12-14-16**

Interdisciplinary Studies Proposal  
Updated version, 1/3/17

Based on conversations about this proposal at AAC on 12/5/16 and at Faculty Senate on 12/14/17, the following changes have been made the proposal in this updated version:

- To reduce potential confusion with existing Augsburg majors, students will not be able to develop a name for their major. On transcripts this major will be called Interdisciplinary Studies and the concentration(s) will be noted.
- Questions about the portfolio requirements will be addressed by the faculty team who proposed this major though developing a portfolio template by April 2017. The portfolio will focus only on the learning outcomes that are chosen for the developed major.
- Based on the discussions about the approval process, this draft includes approval from the Department Chairs of the concentration areas. As a result, at least two faculty members (the Faculty Advisor, and the Department Chair) and the appropriate Dean will officially review each proposal. The proposed process addresses concerns about there not being enough faculty oversight without creating a burdensome process.
- The Major Checklist was revised to include Department Chair signatures and to request a list of courses that emphasize the grad skills (writing, speaking, critical thinking, and quantitative reasoning).
- The Finance and Return on Investment section was revised to include the cost of faculty time for advising students who elect this major. However, it is difficult to estimate the amount of time that faculty will be investing in this major and the costs of that time.