SOUTH DAKOTA BOARD OF REGENTS

Academic and Student Affairs
Consent

AGENDA ITEM: 5 – C
DATE: December 8-9, 2021

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SUBJECT
Intent to Plan – DSU – BS in Individualized Studies

CONTROLLING STATUTE, RULE, OR POLICY
BOR Policy 2:23 – Program and Curriculum Approval

BACKGROUND / DISCUSSION
Dakota State University (DSU) requests authorization to develop a proposal to offer a BS in Individualized Studies. The purpose of this baccalaureate degree is to provide students at DSU the opportunity to propose their own plan of study as an Individualized Studies major. This option should only be pursued if the student’s interests and professional goals cannot be adequately met with one of DSU’s existing majors. The Individualized Studies major will appeal to two types of students. The first is a highly motivated student who wishes to seek control of his or her own education trajectory. The second are students who are no longer interested in their original major. For these students, who will likely make up the majority of enrollments in the program, the proposed program would function as a “parachute program.” The program would enhance retention and graduation rates by giving students who have earned a high number of credit hours an option that allows them to graduate on time by applying their earned credits toward a degree option.

Currently, DSU offers a bachelor’s degree in general studies which is intended to allow students who have accumulated significant college credit and who want to complete a baccalaureate degree. The difference is that the general studies program has a set curriculum that spans across subject areas, whereas the proposed program in Individualized Studies has its curriculum determined by the student, including any previously earned credit. For students who are nearing 120 credit hours, the General Studies degree can require students to stay enrolled for several extra semesters to meet the program requirements. This would not be the case with an Individualized Studies degree.

DSU intends to offer the BS in Individualized Studies on campus.

(Continued)

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DRAFT MOTION 20211208_5-C:
I move to authorize DSU to develop a program proposal for an BS in Individualized Studies, as presented.
IMPACT AND RECOMMENDATION

DSU does not request new state resources. Given the way the program is designed, it is anticipated that nearly all students enrolled in this program will be existing students at the university. Based on current data from the General Studies program, it is anticipated that DSU may have 10-15 students complete an Individualized Studies major each year.

Board office staff recommends approval of the intent to plan with the following conditions:

1. The university will research existing curricula, consult with experts concerning the curriculum, and provide assurance in the proposal that the program is consistent with current national standards and with the needs of employers.

2. The proposal will define the specific knowledge, skills, and competencies to be acquired through the program, will outline how each will be obtained in the curriculum and will identify the specific measures to be used to determine whether individual students have attained the expected knowledge, skills, and competencies.

3. The university will not request new state resources without Board permission, and the program proposal will identify the sources and amounts of all funds needed to operate the program and the impact of reallocations on existing programs.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment I – Intent to Plan: DSU – BS in Individualized Studies
SOUTH DAKOTA BOARD OF REGENTS
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS FORMS

Intent to Plan for a New Program

Use this form to request authorization to plan a new baccalaureate major, associate degree program, or graduate program; formal approval or waiver of an Intent to Plan is required before a university may submit a related request for a new program. The Board of Regents, Executive Director, and/or their designees may request additional information. After the university President approves the Intent to Plan, submit a signed copy to the Executive Director through the system Chief Academic Officer. Only post the Intent to Plan to the university website for review by other universities after approval by the Executive Director and Chief Academic Officer.

UNIVERSITY: DSU

DEGREE(S) AND TITLE OF PROGRAM: BS Individualized Studies

INTENDED DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION: Fall 2022

☐ Please check this box to confirm that:

- The individual preparing this request has read AAC Guideline 2.4, which pertains to new intent to plan requests for new programs, and that this request meets the requirements outlined in the guidelines.
- This request will not be posted to the university website for review of the Academic Affairs Committee until it is approved by the Executive Director and Chief Academic Officer.

University Approval

To the Board of Regents and the Executive Director: I certify that I have read this intent to plan, that I believe it to be accurate, and that it has been evaluated and approved as provided by university policy.

[Signature]
President of the University

10/1/2021
Date

Note: In the responses below, references to external sources, including data sources, should be documented with a footnote (including web addresses where applicable).

1. What is the general nature/purpose of the proposed program? Please include a brief (1-2 sentence) description of the academic field in this program.

The purpose of this baccalaureate degree is to provide students at DSU the opportunity to propose an Individualized Studies major. This option should only be pursued if the student’s interests and professional goals cannot be adequately met with one of DSU’s existing majors. Currently, DSU offers a bachelor’s degree in general studies which is intended to allow students who have accumulated significant college credit and who want to complete a baccalaureate degree.
2. What is the need for the proposed program (e.g., Regental system need, institutional need, workforce need, etc.)? What is the expected demand for graduates nationally and in South Dakota (provide data and examples; data sources may include but are not limited to the South Dakota Department of Labor, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Regental system dashboards, etc.)? Please cite any sources in a footnote.

The Individualized Studies major will appeal to two types of students. The first type is highly motivated and seeks to control his or her own educational trajectory. For this reason, Individualized Studies at other institutions are often administered by the Honors Program. For the second type of student, the Individualized Studies can function as a “parachute program” designed to enhance retention and graduation rates. When a student is no longer interested in his or her major, the student can either switch majors or withdraw. If there are no appealing major alternatives, or if the available alternatives require adding several semesters on to the course of study, the student is much more likely to drop out.1 By providing an Individualized Studies option, both types of students will have greater control over their academic future and will be more likely to complete a BS degree at DSU. Currently, this will be the only Individualized Studies in the regental system.

The Individualized Studies functions differently from our existing BGS program for both types of students. For the first type of student, the BGS program is too prosaic and proscriptive. Students must complete 15 credits each from three pre-identified emphases areas. For the second type of student, once they declare a BGS major, the program’s strict requirements can easily necessitate an additional 2-3 full-time semesters beyond the original four-year graduation plan.

While this will be the first Individualized Studies in the regental system, the program is quite common at other institutions.2 Other regental schools have Interdisciplinary Studies programs or General Studies programs, but these have relatively strict requirements, much like a typical major, and therefore can add several additional semesters to a student’s plan of study.

Post-graduate career opportunities for the Individualized Studies will vary according to the course of study. Each Individualized Studies must first be approved by the General Studies Director in consultation with other faculty experts on campus. Post-graduate career opportunities should be factored in before approving any plan. For the first type of student, post-graduate plans should be clearly identified and researched. At its most basic level, any Individualized Studies should prepare students for the same type of post-graduate opportunities as the existing General Studies program. According to our own website, these include such positions as Manager, Consultant, Executive Assistant, and Operations Manager.3 While post-graduate earnings for either the Individualized Studies or the General Studies major could potentially be lower than some of our other DSU majors, a more effective comparison might be between BS

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1 Students frequently report finances as being the major factor in deciding to withdraw from college. While this program will not reduce the cost of individual courses, it will reduce the time needed to complete a degree for many students, thereby potentially saving them tens of thousands of dollars. See Josh Moody, “How to Avoid Dropping out of College,” US News and World Report, 20 March 2019.

2 Some schools with Individualized Majors include James Madison University, the University of Washington, and Columbia University. Several smaller schools also offer this option, such as Lesley University, Marlboro College, and Elizabethtown College.

3 https://dsu.edu/programs/general-studies-bgs.html
graduates and non-graduates. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2020 the annual median earnings for an individual with an undergraduate degree is nearly 67% higher than someone with only a high school diploma.\(^4\) The individual with a college degree has a 3.5 times lower poverty rate and can expect to earn an additional $900,000 in lifetime earnings.\(^5\) These numbers are compelling when evaluating the potential impact of an Individualized Major for the second type of student.

3. **How would the proposed program benefit students?**

It would provide all interested students with greater control over their educational experience and enhance retention for students discouraged with their declared major.

4. **How does the proposed program relate to the university's mission as provided in South Dakota Statute and Board of Regents Policy, and to the current Board of Regents Strategic Plan 2014-2020?**

*Links to the applicable State statute, Board Policy, and the Board of Regents Strategic Plan are listed below for each campus.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>State Statute</th>
<th>Board Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BHSU</td>
<td>SDCL § 13-59</td>
<td>BOR Policy 1:10:4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSU</td>
<td>SDCL § 13-59</td>
<td>BOR Policy 1:10:5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSU</td>
<td>SDCL § 13-59</td>
<td>BOR Policy 1:10:6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDSMT</td>
<td>SDCL § 13-60</td>
<td>BOR Policy 1:10:3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDSU</td>
<td>SDCL § 13-58</td>
<td>BOR Policy 1:10:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USD</td>
<td>SDCL § 13-57</td>
<td>BOR Policy 1:10:1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Board of Regents Strategic Plan 2014-2020*

This proposed program relies on pre-existing courses at DSU, all of which have been approved in accordance with South Dakota Statute and Board of Regents Policy. Because of DSU’s unique mission as “an institution specializing in programs in computer management, computer information systems, and other related undergraduate and graduate programs,” many of the university’s existing courses are unique to DSU, and therefore any Individualized Major would be similarly unique.\(^6\) For example, the existing General Studies degree requires a student to focus on three emphases from a possible 9 areas to choose from. Nearly all 9 of these are common across the Board of Regents system. The proposed Individualized Study major would allow students instead to focus specifically on those areas unique to DSU.

The Individualized Major also contributes to the Board of Regents Strategic Plan, primarily in the areas of retention and graduation rates (as mentioned above). The strategic plan calls for a system-wide retention rate of 83% and a 6-year graduation rate of 54%.\(^7\) When a student is no longer interested in his or her major, the student can either switch majors or withdraw. If there

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\(^5\) Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities, “How does a college degree improve graduates’ employment and earnings potential?”


\(^7\) SDBOR 2014-2020 Strategic Plan, https://www.sdbor.edu/the-board/StrategicPlan/Pages/default.aspx.
are no appealing major alternatives, or if the available alternatives require adding several semesters on to the course of study, the student is much more likely to drop out.

5. **Do any related programs exist at other public universities in South Dakota?** If a related program already exists, explain the key differences between the existing programs and the proposed program, as well as the perceived need for adding the proposed new program. Would approval of the proposed new program create opportunities to collaborate with other South Dakota public universities? A list of existing system programs are available through the university websites and the RIS Reporting: Academic Reports Database. If there are no related programs within the Regental system, enter “None.”

While SDSU has a BA/BS Interdisciplinary Studies, the proposed DSU Individualized Studies is different in that it has greater flexibility. Most notably, the DSU version draws on an entirely different set of course options than are available at SDSU or at any other university in the region.

6. **Do related programs exist at public colleges and universities in Minnesota, North Dakota, Montana, and/or Wyoming?** If a related program exists, enter the name of the institution and the title of the program; if no related program exists, enter “None” for that state. Add additional lines if there are more than two such programs in a state listed.

This question addresses opportunities available through Minnesota Reciprocity and WICHE programs such as the Western Undergraduate Exchange and Western Regional Graduate Program in adjacent states. List only programs at the same degree level as the proposed program. For example, if the proposed program is a baccalaureate major, then list only related baccalaureate majors in the other states and do not include associate or graduate programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Program Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minnesota</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest Minnesota State University</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary Studies, BS/BA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan State University</td>
<td>Individualized Studies, BA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Minnesota-Crookston</td>
<td>Applied Studies, BS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Minnesota-Duluth</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary Studies, BA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Minnesota-Morris</td>
<td>Design your Own Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>North Dakota</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of North Dakota</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Montana</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana State</td>
<td>Directed Interdisciplinary Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wyoming</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Wyoming College</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Wyoming College</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary Studies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Are students enrolling in this program expected to be new to the university or redirected from other existing programs at the university?

While it is possible that highly motivated students may choose to come to DSU because of the freedom to design their own degree, it is anticipated that the large majority will be redirected from other existing programs at the university.

8. What are the university’s expectations/estimates for enrollment in the program through the first five years? What are the university’s expectations/estimates for the annual number of graduates from the program after the first five years? Provide an explanation of the methodology the university used in developing these estimates.

We currently have 49 students enrolled in the General Studies program. Of these, 22 have earned more than 100 credit hours, several of whom will be unable to complete the existing General Studies requirements within a semester. Indeed, 10 of the 49 General Studies students have already earned more than 120 credits, the amount typically required for graduation. If these students had been allowed to create an individualized major, they may have been able to graduate in a timely fashion. Furthermore, there are undoubtedly students that are enrolled in a major that they find unsatisfying and yet feel that there are no options available for them. Thus, it is possible that we have as many as 10-15 students complete an Individualized Studies major each year. Regardless the number, there is no need to create and staff any additional courses, therefore the budgetary impact is negligible.

9. Complete the following charts to indicate if the university intends to seek authorization to deliver the entire program on campus, at any off campus location (e.g., UC Sioux Falls, Capital University Center, Black Hills State University-Rapid City, etc.) or deliver the entire program through distance technology (e.g., as an on-line program)?

Note: The accreditation requirements of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) require Board approval for a university to offer programs off-campus and through distance delivery.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes/No</th>
<th>Intended Start Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On campus</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes/No</th>
<th>If Yes, list location(s)</th>
<th>Intended Start Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Off campus</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Choose an item. Choose an item.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes/No</th>
<th>If Yes, identify delivery methods</th>
<th>Intended Start Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distance Delivery (online/other distance delivery methods)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Choose an item. Choose an item.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes/No</th>
<th>If yes, identify institutions:</th>
<th>Intended Start Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does another BOR institution already have authorization to offer the program online?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. **What are the university’s plans for obtaining the resources needed to implement the program?** *Indicate “yes” or “no” in the columns below.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development/Start-up</th>
<th>Long-term Operation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reallocate existing resources</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply for external resources</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If checking this box, please provide examples of the external funding identified below.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask Board to seek new State resources</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note that requesting the Board to seek new State resources may require additional planning and is dependent upon the Board taking action to make the funding request part of their budget priorities. Universities intending to ask the Board for new State resources for a program should contact the Board office prior to submitting the intent to plan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask Board to approve a new or increased student fee</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. **Curriculum Example:** *Provide (as Appendix A) the curriculum of a similar program at another college or university.* *The Appendix should include required and elective courses in the program. Catalog pages or web materials are acceptable for inclusion. Identify the college or university and explain why the selected program is a model for the program under development.*

See Appendix A.
Appendix A

Southwest Minnesota State University’s Interdisciplinary Studies
http://www.smsu.edu/academics/programs/interdisciplinarystudies

“The purpose of the Individualized Interdisciplinary Major is to provide each student in good academic standing the opportunity to design and pursue a major (as part of his/her BA or BS degree requirements) which transcends existing majors. The IIM allows the student to formulate an integrated program from two or more disciplines that meets his/her needs in a more viable way than the traditional majors.

“To learn more about the procedures and guidelines for developing an Individualized Interdisciplinary major, visit the program webpage at: www.SMSU.edu/academics/programs/interdisciplinarystudies.” (There is no additional information at the website.)

Metropolitan State University Individualized Studies BA
https://www.metrostate.edu/academics/programs/individualized-studies-ba

“For students who want to create their own academic path, the Bachelor of Arts in Individualized Studies program places the needs and dreams of those students at the center of their educational journey. Since 1971, our students have been able to design individual degree programs to meet their educational, professional, and personal goals. Your unique Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree can be customized to build on what you have already learned and accomplished in school, work and in life. CIS offers you a chance to:

• Incorporate courses from a variety of different subjects
• Design a degree that reflects your educational, personal, and career interests
• Transfer credits from other schools and apply them towards a BA degree
• Use creative learning strategies, including prior learning to complete your degree in less time and money

“The Individualized Studies Bachelor of Arts degree reflects the original mission of Metropolitan State University—to give students primary authority over and responsibility for their educations. Students design their own course of study with guidance from faculty in the initial course, PRSP 301 Perspectives: Educational Philosophy & Planning.

“If you are looking for an education that spans multiple subjects and professions, or an area in which Metropolitan State does not offer a major, the College of Individualized Studies may be your academic home. The Individualized BA degree program gives you the opportunity to:

• Focus your degree on your individual learning and career
• Combine multiple subjects from across the university curriculum
• Earn credit for learning outside the classroom
• Apply up to 80 Technical Program credits to your four-year degree

“To navigate the limitless possibilities of the individually designed academic experience, students are assigned academic advisors who assist them in their progress toward completion of the degree.”

Montana State University Directed Interdisciplinary Studies
https://www.montana.edu/honors/dis.html

“The Directed Interdisciplinary Studies (D.I.S.) degree is for undergraduates who want to pursue an area of scholarly/creative inquiry that falls outside the established departmental structure and existing degree programs at MSU. The D.I.S. degree integrates at least three academic disciplines, as identified by the student and approved by the student’s Faculty Advisory Committee
(FAC). A "discipline" can be a current program offered at MSU, but it need not be: disciplines can span departments and/or include courses or programs at other institutions.

“The FAC members will represent the student's academic disciplines and will work collaboratively with the student and D.I.S. Director to design and approve coursework and an independent research or creative project to address the intersection of the student’s interests. Each D.I.S. degree curriculum has the potential to be uniquely suited to each individual student. The student, with approval by the FAC, will determine whether the degree will be designated as a B.S. or a B.A., depending on the specific combination of academic disciplines for their degree.

“The D.I.S. program is not intended as an exploratory experience for students who are undecided about choosing a major: rather, the program is for independently-driven students have have a directed goal that requires interdisciplinarity. Such a skillset can be highly valuable for futures in entrepreneurship, leadership, medical school, law school, and many other interdisciplinary fields. We expect students graduating with a D.I.S degree to have cultivated the following (outcomes of the D.I.S program):

- Learn three specific technical skills related to disciplines of focus
- Use consilience to solve complex interdisciplinary problems
- Build project management skills
- Communicate and collaborate across disparate communities
- Develop a professional network
- Produce a professional, scholarly product related to the D.I.S. project

“Students may formally apply for admission to the D.I.S. program no earlier than the second semester of their freshman year. Students interested in pursuing a D.I.S. degree are encouraged to schedule a meeting with the D.I.S. Director, Dr. Logan Schultz, (logan.schultz@montana.edu) to discuss their plans. The D.I.S. Oversight Board members are also great resources who are familiar with the program. Prospective students can reach out to them with questions about potential mentors or specific fields of interest.”