

## CENTER FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY AND SPECIAL STUDIES

### GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT-DESIGNED MULTIDISCIPLINARY MAJORS AND MINORS: **(Revised March 2003)**

The Multidisciplinary Major/Minor Program of CISS affords students the opportunity to design their own curriculum. Student-designed majors/minors may be constructed in one of two ways: 1) A student may use a faculty-designed template to develop a course of study. German studies, Asian Studies, and Environmental Studies, for example, have such a template; or 2) A student may design an entirely unique major or minor with the guidance of faculty sponsors.

In either case, here is the process to follow:

***Initial Meeting:*** The student should meet with the Director of CISS.

***Advisors:*** The student should obtain a commitment from two faculty members in different departments related to the proposed major/minor who are willing to serve as advisors and work with the student on the written proposal and the curriculum. These two sponsors, with the Director of the CISS, will serve as the student's advisory committee. Advisors will provide letters of support assessing the program of study.

***Conceptualizing the Major/Minor:*** Conceptualizing the major/minor is the chief task of the student. This requires more than the bringing together of courses related to a particular topic. The proposal should define a systematic body of knowledge and demonstrate a logical progression in the curriculum. Thus, movement through the major should involve the acquisition of greater depth and capacity for analysis, and courses should move from an introductory to an advanced level. **One point to keep firmly and clearly in mind is that the major or minor has to be conceived as appropriate for a degree in the liberal arts at this College. In other words, a curriculum that looks like a bachelor's in business or a bachelor's in the fine arts or a bachelor in engineering or in any other vocational area would most likely not be approved by the CISS Committee on Majors and Minors.**

***Courses:*** The proposed curriculum for a major should include 14 courses from three disciplines and fall within the competence of the College faculty, although students are allowed to draw upon the resources of Consortium schools, Study Abroad, the Washington Semester Program, and Semester Away for appropriate courses. If the multidisciplinary major is a double major, the maximum number of courses for each major will be 10. Courses from the disciplinary major cannot count towards the multidisciplinary major. In other words, one needs 20 courses total between the two majors, or ten each. One of the courses in the multidisciplinary major curriculum should be a capstone tutorial, which will provide the opportunity for synthesizing the student's knowledge on an appropriate project. A multidisciplinary minor curriculum should consist of 6 courses from three departments. No more than 2 courses from the disciplinary major can count towards the multidisciplinary minor. The reason for the distinction in counting courses between the major and minor is that a major curriculum promises a greater measure of competence than a minor. The College has established that ten courses assures that competence, but not eight.

***The application:*** The student should submit the written proposal, the course planning forms, and his/her advising transcript or the unofficial transcript—all in 11 copies—to the Director of CISS. Faculty letters should be submitted by the advisors. If the proposal is approved by the CISS Committee on Majors and Minors, the student will be informed by letter and copies of the student's curricular plan will be sent to the Registrar, to the appropriate Class Dean, and to the appointed Faculty Advisor.

***GPA:*** The student's GPA should be at least 3.00 for a multidisciplinary major.

Professor Richard Matlak, the Director of CISS, is available to meet with any student interested in pursuing this option. Call Maureen Consigli at 508-793-3484 to schedule an appointment or email [mconsigli@holycross.edu](mailto:mconsigli@holycross.edu) if you would like application materials emailed to you.