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MEMORANDUM

To: Donna E. Shalala, President

From: Richard L. Williamson
Chair, Faculty Senate

Date: February 3, 2014

Subject: Faculty Senate Legislation #2013-24(B) – Establish an Independent Major in the College of Arts and Sciences

The Faculty Senate, at its January 29, 2014 meeting, voted unanimously to approve the proposal to establish an Independent Major in the College of Arts and Sciences. This major will attract students who are self-motivated to pursue studies in programs that are not a designated major or in a major that is emerging. It will be limited to no more than five students within the initial three years of it being offered. After three years or five students have completed their Bachelor's degree with an IM, whichever comes first, an internal review of the program will be conducted and the results provided to the administration and the Faculty Senate.

This legislation is now forwarded to you for your action.

RLW/rh

Enclosure

cc: Thomas LeBlanc, Executive Vice President and Provost
William S. Green, Senior Vice Provost, Dean of Undergraduate Studies
Leonidas Bachas, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
Maria Stampino, Senior Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
Karen Beckett, Registrar

CAPSULE: Faculty Senate Legislation #2013-24(B) – Establish an Independent Major in the College of Arts and Sciences

APPROVED: D. S. Gull DATE: 2/26/2014
(President's Signature)

OFFICE OR INDIVIDUAL TO IMPLEMENT: Dean Bachas

EFFECTIVE DATE OF LEGISLATION: IMMEDIATELY
(if other than June 1 next following)

NOT APPROVED AND REFERRED TO: _____

REMARKS (IF NOT APPROVED): _____

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI
COLLEGE of
ARTS & SCIENCES



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TO: Richard Williamson, Chair
Faculty Senate

FROM: Leonidas Bachas
Dean

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'L. Bachas', written over the name 'Leonidas Bachas'.

SUBJECT: Independent Major

DATE: January 17, 2014

Please accept this memo as a follow up to the discussion at the General Welfare Committee Meeting of January 15, 2014 regarding the proposal for an Independent Major in the College of Arts and Sciences. The attached proposal reflects the recommendation of the General Welfare Committee.

I also want you to note that the proposal for an Independent Major was voted unanimously in favor by the College faculty at their meeting on Tuesday, November 19, 2013.

Should you have any questions or require additional information, please let me know

LGB/rkg

Proposal for an Independent Major for students in the College of Arts and Sciences

Introduction and Motivation

The College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Miami offers almost forty majors and even more minors. Many students pursue their intellectual goals by selecting two or even three majors. For a few students, however, pursuing a major among those we currently offer means abandoning their interests fully or partially. In order to serve the needs of these undergraduates, we propose a new Independent Major (IM), which will allow students to design personalized programs of study consisting of complementary courses and a capstone research/creative project that together reflect both the breadth and depth of their interests.

The IM will allow students to pursue a BA or a BS degree in the College, depending on the field of study and in consultation with the Guidance Committee; students will fulfill all requirements for such degrees. Because of the structured nature of this new major, it is not the same as the existing BLA degree, which is in fact rich with 3-, 4-, and 500-level courses but is rather free-ranging. As the proposal indicates, the IM depends on one-on-one advising, done by the Guidance Committee for each individual student.

Furthermore, the IM complements and builds on the cognates as vehicles for satisfying General Education requirements; we hope that students will find many areas of study and research because of being exposed to issues and questions in the cognates they will take.

Many other institutions offer such an option including the Interdisciplinary Major Program at USC, Multidisciplinary Studies at the University of Oklahoma, the Independent Interdisciplinary Major at Brandeis, the Student-Designed Interdisciplinary Major at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, the Topical Studies Major at Kentucky, the Individually Designed Major at Stanford, and the Gallatin School of Individualized Study at NYU. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* offered a good overview of these program in September 2010; here is a link to the article:

<http://chronicle.com/article/Newly-Customized-Majors-Suit/124284/>

We believe that the new IM at UM will likely serve as an effective recruiting and retention tool.

Students attracted to this new major will be self-motivated to explore either an existing field that is not an explicitly designated major in the CAS and at UM (e.g. linguistics) or one that is emerging (e.g. peace studies). It can incorporate greater interdisciplinary breadth than currently is offered in existing majors by including complementary courses from at least two departments or colleges. Students typically will initiate the process by approaching a faculty member with whom they will designate specific coursework, outline a research/creative project, and identify other faculty members to form a Guidance Committee and ultimately finalize the proposal.

Evidence of student demand is provided by a Student Government initiative that originated in AY2012-13 titled "Build-a major." As to the marketability of such a degree, one of the mantras recurring during this recession is the ability to "think outside the box" that companies appreciate in college graduates. Thus, a program of study that relies on connection between disciplines falls directly along these lines. Further anecdotal evidence comes from the Toppel Career Center, which reports that employers privilege students with the enterprising and determined mindset that those pursuing an IM would presumably possess and the mental agility to connect disparate fields and data fostered by the IM.

It is our inclination that no more than five students will complete this program within the initial three years of it being offered (by comparison, UMass offers a Bachelor's Degree with Individual Concentration, similar to the one we are proposing; they graduate between twenty and thirty students *per annum*, over a general UG population of *circa* 22,000 students). The program will be reviewed by the Advisory Committee as outlined on page 4 of the present proposal.

Fiscal implications are minimal: depending on program demand, the College will consider some rewards for faculty who take on the responsibility of Chair of the Guidance Committee.

Program Organization and Governance

A student's Guidance Committee typically will comprise two tenured or tenure-track faculty, typically from different departments, who represent the disciplinary breadth of the courses selected for the IM. A third Guidance Committee member might be appropriate when the proposed course of study encompasses expertise from three Departments or disciplines. The Guidance Committee Chair, who has primary oversight responsibility regarding satisfactory completion of the major, will serve as the primary advisor for the student's senior research/creative project under most circumstances, and must be a tenure-track faculty. Exceptions to the Chair serving as the primary advisor might include situations where there are co-advisors.

Oversight of all Guidance Committees will be performed by an Advisory Committee that maintains uniform standards by reviewing and approving all proposals submitted for an IM; we want to underscore that proposal approval is not guaranteed. The Advisory Committee will consist of three CAS faculty members, each representing one of our broad disciplinary areas (Arts and Humanities, People and Society, and STEM). Each of the three members will be appointed by the Senior Associate Dean for Undergraduate Affairs for staggered three-year terms. To maintain continuity and ensure smooth knowledge transfer, it is recommended that only one Advisory Committee member be replaced in a given academic year. The organizational structure is summarized in Figure 1.

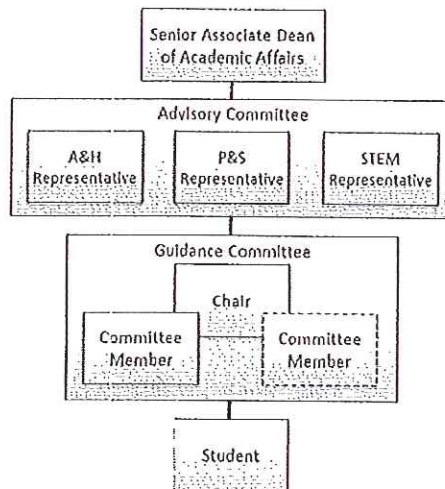


Figure 1. Organizational structure of the Independent Major

Program Requirements

Students may begin to develop a proposal for the IM when they have reached sophomore standing. The proposal should explain why existing majors are inappropriate or inadequate to satisfy the student's interests. Students will be ineligible for declaring the IM upon reaching senior standing, that is, they must declare as a junior and spend at least two (2) full semesters in residence at UM in the IM.

Students will require a cumulative UM GPA of 3.25 or higher to be eligible for the IM. There is significant risk of delayed graduation for a student dismissed from this program late in the junior or senior year without having made sufficient progress in any other major as a fallback, so the Guidance Committee should apprise students of it early in the process of selecting program requirements.

The IM proposal must include at least thirty (30) credits of coursework beyond those required to fulfill General Education requirements, of which six (6) will be satisfied by a Capstone project/thesis in the last two (2) semesters of the Bachelor's degree. Because many courses have variable availability and conflicts are inevitable, strong proposals will identify more than 30 credits of coursework before being submitted to the Advisory Committee for approval. If a student wishes to pursue the IM as a double-major, the Advisory Committee should give particular attention to the appropriateness of the student's plan of study; no double-counting of credits will be allowed between the two majors. The IM proposal form will be available on the IM web page with other program materials.

Roles and Responsibilities

Student

- Initiates a potential IM with one or more potential Guidance Committee Chairs. The Office of Undergraduate Advising may assist in publicizing the IM option and with identification of potential Guidance Committee Chairs. The final Guidance Committee structure should be decided by the student after consultation with the anticipated Chair.
- Submits the annual IM progress report to the Guidance Committee Chair for review/comment by the Guidance Committee at end of each academic year before the progress report is forwarded to the Advisory Committee.

Guidance Committee Chair

- Supervises the student to craft the IM proposal and identify potential Guidance Committee members.
- Decides, in consultation with the student, which Area of Knowledge the IM will fulfill.
- Assumes a mentor role for the student throughout his/her *curriculum studiorum* in the IM program.
- Assists with arrangement of the Capstone project/thesis, monitors progress, and assigns grades for Capstone units.
- Coordinates review of the student's annual progress report with the Guidance Committee, and submits the final report with Committee comments to the Advisory Committee.
- Reports any issues/concerns, particularly related to student performance, to the Advisory Committee.

Guidance Committee Member(s)

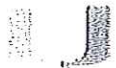
- Provides supplementary mentorship to student as well as advice concerning the Capstone project reflecting his/her expertise.
- Reviews student's annual progress report and provides feedback to Guidance Committee Chair.

- Plays co-leading or supporting role in Capstone project/thesis work, and signs off on its completion.
- Informs the Advisory Committee when a student is struggling with an IM, or when personnel matters within the Committee require a change in committee structure/membership.

Advisory Committee

- Reviews all IM proposals to maintain quality and requirements.
- Reviews all student progress reports once each academic year (spring or fall, TBD).
- Performs an internal review of the IM program (supervised by the Senior Associate Dean for Undergraduate Affairs) after three (3) years or after five (5) students have completed their Bachelor's degrees with an IM, whichever comes first, to ensure that it remains attractive to students and is helpful to the intellectual community of the College at large.
- Develops metrics and tracks and analyzes IM student progress (including satisfying SACS requirements) and post-graduation activities for a minimum of 3-5 years (and as long as possible) to determine which types of majors produce the successful post-graduation outcomes (and might therefore be viable as longer-term program spin-offs).

UNIVERSITY
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Office of Planning,
Institutional Research,
and Assessment

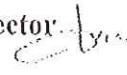
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MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 17, 2014

TO: Dr. Leonidas Bachas, Dean
College of Arts & Sciences

FROM: David E. Wiles, Executive Director
Assessment and Accreditation 

SUBJECT: Establishment of an Independent Major

On November 25, 2013, the College of Arts and Sciences submitted a proposal notifying our office of its intent to establish an Independent Major. Based on the details of the proposal, students will have the ability to design a personalized program of study consisting of complementary courses and a capstone research/creative project. The proposed major may require submission of a full prospectus to the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC).

Additionally, the proposed major would need to obtain approval from Office of the Faculty Senate prior to the prospectus submission to SACSCOC.

Please feel free to contact our office should you have any further questions (305) 284-9431.

cc: Faculty Senate

Dr. William Green, Sr. Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education