Bachelor of individualized studies (BIS)

The Bachelor of individualized studies (BIS) is an alternative degree program that provides certain types of flexibility not available in B.A. and B.S. programs. Rather than completing a major within a single field, students focus their coursework on three areas of concentration, one of which may consist of courses from outside CLA. The areas do not have to be related to each other, but the BIS program proposal must include an explanation of the student’s overall educational goals.

Working closely with a BIS adviser, students develop program proposals that explain their academic goals and list the courses to be included in the program. The BIS proposal must be approved by faculty or department advisers with expertise in the areas of concentration.

In addition, some departments and colleges have established prerequisites or required courses for students who want to include in their BIS programs concentration areas based in those departments and colleges. Consult a BIS adviser for specific information on proposal procedures and on department and college guidelines.

The following is a list of previously approved BIS programs:

- Japanese, Global Studies, Management
- Computer Science, Geography, Religious Studies
- Social Work, Child Psychology, Third World Development
- Multiculturalism, Leadership Development, Health Issues
- History, Philosophy, Sociology
- Human Sexuality, Cultural and Identity Politics, Sexuality in the Family: Practice and Education
- Afro-American Studies, English, Education
- Economics, Communication Studies, Management

Degree Requirements

Liberal education requirements for the BIS are the same as for the BA degree.

To complete the BIS, students must complete 120 credits, including 50 approved credits at or above 3xxx, distributed among the three concentration areas. The concentration areas may be departmental or thematic in composition, and each must include a minimum of 15 credits at or above 3xxx. Up to 21 credits in the program may be from outside CLA.

A minimum of 20 credits in the BIS concentration areas must be completed after admission to the BIS program.

A maximum of 12 credits of directed studies may be included in a BIS program.

The CLA requirement of 18 credits at or above 3xxx outside the major does not apply.

Final Project

The BIS senior paper requirement is met with a 2,500-word analytic paper written in conjunction with a CLA course in the BIS program.

Academic Advising

In addition to working with a BIS adviser, who will assist students in planning their majors, students also work with a college adviser in their CLA student community who assists them with degree requirements.
What can I do with a BIS?

Skills

BIS majors learn critical and independent thinking, writing, self-confidence, flexibility, and the ability to navigate a complex system are among the most important skills and qualities that BIS graduates say they developed through their individualized degree programs. BIS graduates report that employers are often impressed with the creativity, initiative, and persistence they demonstrate in having completed individualized programs.

Employment

Individualized programs can include courses from a wide variety of departments. The majority of BIS graduates go on to work in fields related to their programs of study. Among the most common fields are communication and media, marketing and advertising, finance, education, human resources, health care, and non-profit program management. In recent years, over 25% of BIS students have gone on to graduate degree programs that prepared them to work in fields ranging from business to landscape architecture to law to medicine to public health to screenwriting.

The Career & Community Learning Center provides CLA students with many of the tools they will need to identify potential careers and to implement their eventual career choice. An extensive resource room, the CLA Link job/internship/volunteer position listing website, career courses and workshops, and a helpful staff are just a few of the ways that we can help. For further information, check us out online or stop by our office.

Career and Community Learning Center
135 Johnston Hall
(612) 624-7577

How do I declare a BIS major?

You will be required to declare a major by the time you have completed 60 credits.

1. Go to a BIS information meeting to learn more about program requirements and the program approval process. Information meetings are held 3 times a week. You may call (612) 624-8006 or come to 345 Fraser Hall to sign up.

2. When you have decided upon your program goals and concentration areas, meet with a BIS adviser to fill out a BIS Major Declaration Form.

3. File this form with your CLA student community. At the time the major declaration is filed, a registration hold will be placed on your records that requires you to meet with a BIS adviser prior to each registration until you have completed the program approval process.

4. To complete the program approval process, you will first work closely with a BIS adviser to develop your BIS program proposal, which explains your academic goals and lists your proposed courses. You will then submit the proposal to the BIS Proposal Review Committee.

5. After the Proposal Review Committee has accepted your proposal, you will bring your BIS program proposal to advisers in your area of concentration for their review and formal approval.

6. Bring the program approval forms signed by your concentration area advisers to a BIS adviser and fill out a major program form.

7. Last, bring the major program form to your CLA Student Community. After this you will no longer be required to see a BIS adviser before you register, but you will need to consult your adviser about any changes in your program and about planning your analytic paper.

For more information

About the bachelor of individualized studies degree:

Individualized Degree Programs Office
345 Fraser Hall
(612) 624-8006
idp@class.cla.umn.edu
http://www.cla.umn.edu/class/idp/

About CLA requirements, graduation, and other information about majors:

If you are uncertain of the CLA student community to which you are assigned, contact the
CLA Student Information Office
49 Johnston Hall
(612) 625-2020

About careers, internships, and community learning opportunities in this major and others:

Career and Community Learning Center
135 Johnston Hall
(612) 624-7577
www.cclc.umn.edu
cclc@class.cla.umn.edu

Remember!

You have not declared a major until you have:

- completed a BIS Major Declaration Form with your BIS adviser
- filed a copy with your CLA student community
- be sure to keep a copy for yourself