What is BIS/IDIM?
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. These 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.

The Individually designed interdepartmental major (IDIM) program enables students to fulfill the major program requirements for the B.A. degree by completing an interdepartmental program of coursework focused on a theme of their own choosing, designed in consultation with faculty and staff advisers. IDIM programs consist of three or four areas of concentration, integrated in such a way that the major has strong thematic unity and coherence.

How do I begin planning my BIS/IDIM?
The first step for all students interested in the BIS and IDIM is to attend one of our group information sessions. These last between 45 minutes and an hour, and provide all sorts of detailed information on eligible coursework, departmental requirements, sample programs, and the approval process.

To sign up for one of these info sessions, please call Bruce at 612-624-8006. Space is limited to eight students per session, so please call well in advance of the session you’re interested in. Meetings are held about thrice weekly.

How do I declare a BIS or IDIM major?
You will be required to declare a major by the time you have completed 60 credits.

- Go to a BIS or IDIM 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.
- When you have decided upon your program goals and concentration areas, meet with a BIS/IDIM adviser to fill out a BIS or IDIM Major Declaration Form.
You have not declared a major until you have completed a BIS or IDIM Major Declaration Form with your BIS/IDIM adviser and filed a copy with your CLA student community.

Remember that declaring a major is only the first step in the BIS/IDIM planning process. You will still be required to submit a program proposal for approval.

**What kinds of credits can I include in my program?**
In addition to many of the typical courses you take here at the University, the following types of credit may (subject to certain exceptions) be included in a BIS or IDIM program:

1. credits for study abroad and National Student Exchange
2. directed study credits
3. credit-bearing internships
4. transfer credits from other institutions
5. most upper-division second language coursework

In order to qualify for inclusion, credits must:

- be applicable to at least one of the concentrations in your program; and
- be accepted by the U of M for credit, posted to your transcript, with a grade of "C-" (C minus) or better.

More exceptions may apply. Speak with a BIS/IDIM adviser for details.

**Who is my Student Community Adviser? Which Student Community is mine?**
In addition to a major department adviser, all CLA students are assigned to a Student Community based on their declared academic interest(s) or major(s). Call the CLA Student Information Office at (612) 625-2020 to find out who your adviser is, and where your Student Community is located.

**How is a BIS/IDIM adviser different from my Student Community Adviser?**
BIS/IDIM advisers help you with all issues related to the pursuit of your BIS/IDIM program. They assist you in selecting courses appropriate to your program, developing your BIS/IDIM proposal, completing your BIS Analytic Paper or your IDIM Senior Project, and incorporating into your program certain experiences beyond the classroom. More broadly,
BIS/IDIM advisers provide information about how the CLA individualized programs compare and relate to other programs throughout the University, and how students can coordinate their BIS/IDIM programs with their CLA Liberal Education Requirements.

On the other hand, your Student Community adviser (a.k.a. "college adviser") assists you in a variety of matters related to your life as a CLA student. Among other things, college advisers assist students as they navigate the CLA Liberal Education Requirements (including the second language requirement), and graduation procedures and requirements. These advisers can also guide you as you submit petitions for exemptions to deadlines and policies, help you resolve academic difficulties, and refer you to a host of University resources.

**Do BIS/IDIM students have to complete the CLA second language requirement?**
Yes.

The BIS and the IDIM are the two individualized degree programs for College of Liberal Arts students. Because you remain a CLA student while pursuing your BIS/IDIM, you would be required to complete the CLA liberal education requirements (including writing intensive courses, diversified core, and designated themes) as well as the CLA second language requirement. For more information on how to coordinate these requirements with your BIS/IDIM program, speak with a BIS/IDIM adviser.

For more information about the CLA liberal education requirements, see "Liberal Education Requirements" at the University Registrar’s website.

**Can I change my program after I submit a proposal?**
Yes, to a certain degree.

A student can substitute for courses in his or her program with the approval of either a BIS/IDIM adviser or a faculty adviser. In some cases both are required.

The substitution of an entire concentration, or multiple courses across concentrations, may so affect the overall constitution and structure of the student’s program that submission of a new program proposal may be necessary.
Advisers and faculty understand that students cannot be certain of future course availability either here at the U or (for students incorporating transfer, National Student Exchange, and/or study abroad credit) at another institution. We therefore advise students to plan as well--and as far into the future--as possible and practicable. In cases where a desired course becomes unavailable, advisers work with faculty and students to identify a good alternative.

In any case, changes to a student's program must be approved by the relevant adviser and/or faculty member. If you have any questions, or you foresee changes in your BIS/IDIM program, consult a BIS/IDIM adviser.

**How long does it take to complete a BIS or IDIM program?**
The length of time necessary to complete a BIS or IDIM program will vary from student to student. Many variables affect the time required to complete a program. Among them are:

- the nature of, and number of credits in, the proposed program
- the number and type of BIS/IDIM program courses already completed
- plans for National Student Exchange or study abroad
- academic progress requirements for financial aid
- the demands of one's job and other extracurricular activities

To find out more about how long it might take you to complete a BIS/IDIM program, you should attend one of our introductory information sessions. Call 612-624-8006 to sign up.

**Can I pursue a BIS/IDIM with honors?**
Certainly. Honors students must be sure to fulfill both the CLA requirements for Honors and the BIS/IDIM program requirements. In many cases, students can fulfill multiple requirements with a single course or experience. For instance, it is possible for an IDIM student to satisfy the honors thesis requirement by completing his or her IDIM senior project. Additionally, students can receive BIS/IDIM program credit as well as credit for an Honors opportunity through many study abroad courses and programs.

For more information on Honors requirements, consult the CLA Honors Website. For more information on how to fulfill BIS/IDIM program requirements as an Honors student, see "Honors Program: Bachelor of
Individualized Studies" and/or "Honors Program: Individually Designed Interdepartmental Major" under the Resources section of this website.

**What do graduates say about BIS/IDIM?**

According to results of a recent survey, alumni of the BIS and IDIM feel satisfied with overall value of their individualized degree programs, and would recommend the programs to current students.

Surveys were distributed to the 529 alums graduating between 1990 and 1999. Survey results represent the views of 195 respondents. (131 BIS, 63 IDIM). The purpose of the survey was to gather information about what BIS/IDIM students have done after they leave the University and to learn how they evaluate their experiences in the individualized degree program.

In general, alums rate highly the overall value of the BIS/IDIM; they report that the individualized program has had a significant impact on their lives, values and interests; they recommend the programs to current undergraduates; they receive positive feedback from employers; and they have found the BIS/IDIM to be adequate preparation for advanced degrees such as the M.B.A., Ph.D. and J.D.

To see further results of the survey, click on "BIS/IDIM Alumni Survey" under the "Resources" section of our web page. The full survey is available upon request at the Individualized Degree Programs Office; contact an adviser at 612-624-8006 or idp@class.cla.umn.edu.