

Special Interdisciplinary Major (SIM) Guidelines



Arts &
Sciences

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About the Major

The Special Interdisciplinary Major (SIM) may be proposed by students in the Columbian College of Arts and Sciences whose academic goals cannot be met through one of the existing departmental majors or a combination of majors and minors. The typical SIM curriculum crosses traditional boundaries between academic disciplines.

To propose a SIM, students should devise a curriculum with intrinsic merit that matches the scope of established CCAS majors. This curriculum involves groups of courses that share a common outlook and methodology developed through a sequence of courses. Students proposing a SIM should consider the function and value of courses from different areas in designing their curriculum.

Curriculum Requirements

The proposed major will consist of the following core components:

- 1) A minimum of 36 and a maximum of 54 hours of upper-level coursework (2000-level and above), including both required and elective courses
- 2) A minimum of 45 credit hours must be taken within the Columbian College
- 3) At least one course in research skills is recommended, to prepare for the Capstone project
- 4) The successful completion of CCAS 4191: Special Interdisciplinary Capstone, which includes a successful Capstone defense before the faculty committee, to be held in the last month of the intended graduation term

Student Eligibility

To apply to pursue a SIM, students must:

- 1) Have completed at least 30 credit hours and not more than 75 credits at GW at the time of submission
- 2) Hold a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher
- 3) Have achieved excellent grades in the areas that form the proposed major
- 4) Have been enrolled in the Columbian College for at least two semesters

Faculty Mentor and Faculty Committee

Students are responsible for identifying a faculty committee with three to five members, and one of them serving as primary mentor for the proposed major. The members of the faculty committee must:

- 1) Be faculty members in the Columbian College who will be present for the duration of the student's enrollment, and the primary mentor must be full-time regular faculty
- 2) Have a combined expertise covering the main areas from which the curriculum will be drawn
- 3) Assist the student in the preparation of the proposal
- 4) Approve any changes or substitutions to the curriculum subsequent to its initial approval
- 5) Support the student where needed, in particular when the student is working on the Capstone project

Process for Proposing the Special Interdisciplinary Major

Students intending to propose a SIM should meet with one of the CCAS academic advisors to review the process and discuss the feasibility of the proposed major. Next, students should work with the members of their faculty committee, including their primary faculty mentor, to prepare the proposal. Students are encouraged to meet with the CCAS Director of Academic Advising to discuss their SIM proposal more thoroughly, in order to make sure there is a coherency with the coursework selected for the proposed major, and receive feedback on the proposal overall. Completed proposals and supporting documents are to be submitted to the Undergraduate Dean's Office in Phillips Hall 107. For a SIM to start in the fall semester of the junior year, the submission of the final version of the SIM proposal should be no later than February in the spring semester of the sophomore year. Students are strongly encouraged to start discussing and preparing the proposal in the fall semester before that, to have enough time to develop the curriculum and form the faculty committee.

SIM proposals are examined closely by the CCAS Undergraduate Studies Committee, who will expect proposals to meet certain academic and procedural criteria.

The CCAS Undergraduate Studies Committee may do one of the following:

- 1) Approve the proposal in its entirety
- 2) Make suggestions for modification
- 3) Stipulate specific revisions
- 4) Reject the proposed program of study

The Proposal

Completed proposals must be typed and should include the following:

- 1) A title (no more than 30 characters) that clearly describes the major. This is the title that will appear on the transcript and the diploma
- 2) An explanatory essay of no more than 1,000 words that presents a rationale for the major and that considers both the student's goals and the cohesiveness of the curriculum. The essay should address why the special interdisciplinary major has academic value and why existing majors or combinations of majors and minors do not meet its objectives. The essay should discuss the contribution of each set of courses to the overall concept of the major
- 3) A completed plan of study form (attached) that identifies all courses for the proposed major
- 4) A complete four-year plan that identifies all coursework required to complete the undergraduate degree including major, general education curriculum, and any coursework for a minor (if the student wishes to complete one)
- 5) A 1-2 page statement describing the capstone project and the names of the faculty members who will participate in creating and evaluating the final assignment. A strong capstone statement will include a clear research question or questions, and a timeline for the project. The research plan should include what kinds of information will be gathered and from where, and how the information will be used to address the questions motivating the proposal.
- 6) Letters of support and recommendation from each faculty committee member, commenting on the merit and feasibility of the SIM, and the feasibility of the Capstone project; and indicating their level of involvement and full support for the student's pursuit of the SIM. The primary faculty mentor will additionally commit to their role as primary faculty point of contact for the SIM.

Important Information Regarding Special Interdisciplinary Majors

Students granted approval to pursue a SIM may not declare a double major. Students may pursue a minor as part of their academic plan with a SIM. However, if not incorporated into the original proposal, the minor will require approval by the CCAS Undergraduate Studies Committee. The majority of coursework required for the minor cannot be completed by coursework also required for the SIM.

Students must have an in-person meeting with their faculty committee at least once per semester.

Columbian College SIM Checklist

Student's Name _____

GWid _____

Student

- should have met with one of the CCAS academic advisors to review the process and discuss the feasibility of the proposed major *prior* to submitting the SIM
- . should have met with Director of Academic Advising to discuss their proposal *prior* to submitting the SIM
- is a member of the Columbian College of Arts and Sciences
- . has been enrolled in the Columbian College for at least two semesters
- . has completed at least 30 credit hours and not more than 75 credits at GW at the time of submission
- . holds a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher
- . has achieved excellent grades in the areas that form the proposed major
- . has made sure their faculty committee members review the Faculty Mentor Guidelines before they write their letters of support

Proposed SIM

- . The academic goals of the SIM cannot be met through existing majors/double majors/minors
- . Must include a minimum of 36 and a maximum of 54 hours of upper-level coursework (2000-level and above), including both required courses and elective courses
- . A minimum of 45 credit hours must be taken within the Columbian College
- . At least one course in research skills is recommended, to prepare for the Capstone project
- . A Capstone proposal title that clearly indicates the topic of the project
- . The primary faculty mentor has signed the SIM proposal to indicate that they will be the primary point of contact for the SIM and make sure that the student is well supported by the faculty committee
- . Requires the successful completion of CCAS 4191: Special Interdisciplinary Capstone

Faculty Committee

- . must be comprised of at least three and no more than five faculty, with one of them serving as primary mentor
- . must be faculty members in the Columbian College who will be present for the duration of the student's enrollment, and the primary mentor must be full-time regular faculty
- . must have a combined expertise covering the main areas from which the curriculum will be drawn
- . must have read the Capstone document and commit to supporting the Capstone project

The Proposal must include

- 1) Title (no more than 30 characters)
- 2) Explanatory essay (< 1,000 words)
- 3) A completed plan of study form
- 4) A four-year plan that identifies all the required coursework
- 5) A statement identifying the Capstone final deliverables, and the names of the faculty members who will participate in creating and evaluating the final deliverables
- 6) Letters of support from each faculty committee member

Additionally

- Students may pursue a minor as part of their academic plan with a SIM (will require the approval of the Undergraduate Studies Committee if the minor is not included in the original proposal)
- Students granted approval to pursue a SIM may not declare a double major

Columbian College of Arts and Sciences
Plan of Study for Special Interdisciplinary Major

Name: _____ Primary Faculty Mentor: _____

Title of major: _____

Degree Type (i.e. Bachelor of Arts): _____

List pre-requisite courses below:

List required courses by department below:

DEPT:	DEPT:	DEPT:	DEPT:

List tentative electives by department below:

DEPT:	DEPT:	DEPT:	DEPT:

Additional Information: _____
