

Special Interdisciplinary Major (SIM) Guidelines

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Arts &
Sciences

About the Major

The Special Interdisciplinary Major (SIM) is available to 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.

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, including both required courses and elective courses
- 2) A minimum of 45 credit hours must be taken within the Columbian College
- 3) If relevant, at least one course in research skills is recommended
- 4) The successful completion of CCAS 4191: Special Interdisciplinary Capstone
 - This includes a successful capstone defense before the faculty committee, to be held in April/May 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 the proposal
- 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 member to serve as primary mentor for the proposed major. The faculty mentor must:

- 1) Be a full-time regular faculty member in the Columbian College who will be present for the duration of the student's enrollment
- 2) Have expertise in the areas from which the curriculum will be drawn
- 3) Assist the student in the preparation of the proposal and the selection of a committee comprised of at least two and no more than four faculty who are knowledgeable in areas related to the major

- 4) Approve any changes or substitutions to the curriculum subsequent to its initial approval

Process for Proposing the Special Interdisciplinary Major

Students intending to propose a SIM should meet with their assigned academic advisor to review the process and discuss the feasibility of the proposed major. Next, students should work with their chosen faculty mentor and the members of their committee to prepare the proposal. Students are encouraged to meet with the 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 as well as feedback on the proposal overall. Completed proposals and supporting documents are to be submitted to the Dean's Office in Phillips Hall 107.

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

The 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) A letter of support from the primary faculty mentor. The primary faculty mentor should comment specially on the feasibility of the capstone project.
- 7) Letters of support from each committee member.

Important Information Regarding Special Interdisciplinary Majors

1. 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 Undergraduate Studies Committee. The majority of coursework required for the minor cannot be completed by coursework also required for the SIM
2. Students granted approval to pursue a SIM may not declare a double major
3. You must check in with your primary and secondary advisors at least once a semester

Columbian College SIM Checklist

Student's Name _____

GWid _____

Student

- should have met with one of their academic POD 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 the proposal
- 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 mentors review the Faculty Mentor Guidelines before they write their letter of recommendation.

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, including both required courses and elective courses
- A minimum of 45 credit hours must be taken within the Columbian College
- If relevant, at least one course in research skills is recommended
- A working Capstone Proposal Title, my title clearly indicates the topic of my capstone
- My primary faculty mentor has physically signed my capstone proposal to indicate that they will help create and evaluate my capstone proposal
- Requires the successful completion of CCAS 4191: Special Interdisciplinary Capstone

Faculty Mentor

- must be a full-time regular faculty member in the Columbian College who will be present for the duration of the student's enrollment
- must have expertise in the areas from which the curriculum will be drawn
- my faculty mentor has read and physically signed my capstone document to indicate that they will help create and evaluate my capstone project.

Faculty Committee

- must be comprised of at least 2 (not including the faculty mentor) and no more than a diversity of 4 faculty who are knowledgeable in areas related to the major

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 final assignment and the names of the faculty members who will participate in creating and evaluating the final assignment
- 6) Letters of support from the primary mentor and each 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: _____
