

**SOUTH DAKOTA BOARD OF REGENTS**

**Academic and Student Affairs**  
**Consent**

**AGENDA ITEM: 5 – D (1)**

**DATE: May 10, 2022**

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**SUBJECT**

**New Program Request – DSU – BS in Individualized Studies**

**CONTROLLING STATUTE, RULE, OR POLICY**

[BOR Policy 2:23](#) – Program and Curriculum Approval

[AAC Guideline 2.4](#) – Intent to Plan for a New Program

**BACKGROUND / DISCUSSION**

Dakota State University (DSU) requests permission to offer a BS in Individualized Studies. The purpose of this baccalaureate degree is to provide students at DSU the opportunity to propose their own plan of study as an Individualized Studies major. This option should only be pursued if the student's interests and professional goals cannot be adequately met with one of DSU's existing majors.

The Individualized Studies major will appeal to two types of students. The first is a highly motivated student who wishes to seek control of his or her own education trajectory. The second are students who are no longer interested in their original major. For these students, who will likely make up most enrollments in the program, the proposed program would function as a "parachute program." The program would enhance retention and graduation rates by giving students who have earned a high number of credit hours an option that allows them to graduate on time by applying their earned credits toward a degree option.

Currently, DSU offers a bachelor's degree in general studies which is intended to allow students who have accumulated significant college credit to complete a baccalaureate degree. The difference is that the general studies program has a set curriculum that spans across subject areas, whereas the proposed program in Individualized Studies has its curriculum determined by the student, including any previously earned credit. For students who are nearing 120 credit hours, the General Studies degree can require students to stay enrolled for several extra semesters to meet the program requirements. This would not be the case with an Individualized Studies degree.

The Intent to Plan for this program was approved at the [December 2021](#) BOR meeting, per AAC Guideline 2.4.

(Continued)

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**DRAFT MOTION 20220510\_5-D(1):**

I move to authorize DSU to offer a BS in Individualized Studies, as presented.

**IMPACT AND RECOMMENDATION**

DSU requests authorization to offer the program on campus. There are no new courses required for the proposed program. DSU does not request new state resources. DSU anticipates 25 enrolled students and five graduates within four years.

Board office staff recommends approval of the program.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment I – New Program Request: DSU – BS in Individualized Studies



## SOUTH DAKOTA BOARD OF REGENTS ACADEMIC AFFAIRS FORMS

### New Undergraduate Degree Program

Use this form to propose a new undergraduate degree program. An undergraduate degree program includes a new major, a new degree, or both. The Board of Regents, Executive Director, and/or their designees may request additional information about the proposal. After the university President approves the proposal, submit a signed copy to the Executive Director through the system Chief Academic Officer. Only post the New Undergraduate Degree Program Form to the university website for review by other universities after approval by the Executive Director and Chief Academic Officer.

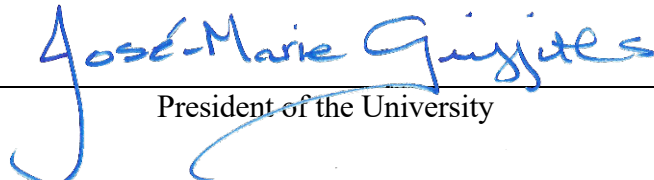
<b>UNIVERSITY:</b>	DSU
<b>MAJOR:</b>	
<b>EXISTING OR NEW MAJOR(S):</b>	Individualized Studies
<b>DEGREE:</b>	
<b>EXISTING OR NEW DEGREE(S):</b>	Bachelors of Science
<b>INTENDED DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION:</b>	Fall 2022
<b>PROPOSED CIP CODE:</b>	24.0199
<b>SPECIALIZATIONS:</b> <i>Note: If the new proposed program includes specific specializations within it, complete and submit a New Specialization Form for each proposed specialization and attach it to this form. Since specializations appear on transcripts, they require Board approval.</i>	None
<b>IS A SPECIALIZATION REQUIRED (Y/N):</b>	No
<b>DATE OF INTENT TO PLAN APPROVAL:</b>	12/7/2021
<b>UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT:</b>	General Studies
<b>BANNER DEPARTMENT CODE:</b>	DGENS
<b>UNIVERSITY DIVISION:</b>	General Studies
<b>BANNER DIVISION CODE:</b>	DGES

☒ **Please check this box to confirm that:**

- The individual preparing this request has read [AAC Guideline 2:9](#), which pertains to new undergraduate degree program requests, and that this request meets the requirements outlined in the guidelines.
- This request will not be posted to the university website for review of the Academic Affairs Committee until it is approved by the Executive Director and Chief Academic Officer.

#### University Approval

*To the Board of Regents and the Executive Director: I certify that I have read this proposal, that I believe it to be accurate, and that it has been evaluated and approved as provided by university policy.*

  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 President of the University

2/17/2022  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

Note: In the responses below, references to external sources, including data sources, should be documented with a footnote (including web addresses where applicable).

**1. What is the nature/purpose of the proposed program? Please include a brief (1-2 sentence) description of the academic field in this program.**

The purpose of this baccalaureate degree is to provide students at DSU the opportunity to propose an Individualized Studies major. This option should only be pursued if the student's interests and professional goals cannot be adequately met with one of DSU's existing majors.

**2. How does the proposed program relate to the university's mission and strategic plan, and to the current Board of Regents Strategic Plan 2014-2020?**

*Links to the applicable State statute, Board Policy, and the Board of Regents Strategic Plan are listed below for each campus.*

DSU: [SDCL § 13-59](#) [BOR Policy 1:10:5](#)  
[Board of Regents Strategic Plan 2014-2020](#)

This proposed program relies on pre-existing courses at DSU, all of which have been approved in accordance with South Dakota Statute and Board of Regents Policy. Because of DSU's unique mission as "an institution specializing in programs in computer management, computer information systems, and other related undergraduate and graduate programs," many of the university's existing courses are unique to DSU, and therefore any Individualized Studies major would be similarly unique.<sup>1</sup> For example, the existing General Studies degree requires a student to focus on three emphases from a possible nine areas to choose from. Nearly all nine of these are common across the Board of Regents system. By contrast, the proposed Individualized Studies major would allow students instead to focus specifically on those areas unique to DSU.

The Individualized Studies major also contributes to the Board of Regents Strategic Plan, primarily in the areas of retention and graduation rates (as mentioned above). The strategic plan calls for a system-wide retention rate of 83% and a 6-year graduation rate of 54%.<sup>2</sup> When a student is no longer interested in their major, the student can either switch majors, transfer universities, or withdraw altogether. By providing a viable self-designed alternative, the goal is to reduce student attrition from the university.

**3. Describe the workforce demand for graduates of the program, including national demand and demand within South Dakota.**

The Individualized Studies major will appeal to two types of students. The first type is highly motivated and seeks to control their own educational trajectory. For this reason, Individualized Studies at other institutions are often administered by the Honors Program. For the second type of student, the Individualized Studies major can function as a "parachute program" designed to enhance retention and graduation rates. As mentioned above, one of the major reasons a student transfers to another university is to change majors. According to some reports, as many as 80%

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<sup>1</sup> DSU Mission Statement, [https://catalog.dsu.edu/content.php?catoid=31&navoid=1462#Mission\\_Statement](https://catalog.dsu.edu/content.php?catoid=31&navoid=1462#Mission_Statement).

<sup>2</sup> SDBOR 2014-2020 Strategic Plan, <https://www.sdbor.edu/the-board/StrategicPlan/Pages/default.aspx>.

of all students will change their major during the course of their college career.<sup>3</sup> In fact, according to Education Advisory Board, students who change their majors graduate at higher rates than their classmates who remain in the same major their entire undergraduate career.<sup>4</sup> Rather than having a student transfer or attrit when they are dissatisfied with their existing major, Individualized Studies will provide them with a third option. Both types of students will benefit from Individualized Studies. Both will have greater control over their academic future and will be more likely to complete a BS degree at DSU.

Post-graduate career opportunities for Individualized Studies will vary according to the course of study. Each Individualized Studies major must first be approved by the General Studies Director in consultation with other faculty experts on campus. Post-graduate career opportunities should be factored in before approving any plan. For the first type of student, post-graduate plans should be clearly identified and researched. At its most basic level, any Individualized Studies major should prepare students for the same type of post-graduate opportunities as the existing General Studies program. According to our own website, these include such positions as Manager, Consultant, Executive Assistant, and Operations Manager.<sup>5</sup> While post-graduate earnings for either the Individualized Studies or the General Studies major could potentially be lower than some of our other DSU majors, a more effective comparison might be between BS graduates and non-graduates. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2020 the annual median earnings for an individual with an undergraduate degree is nearly 67% higher than someone with only a high school diploma.<sup>6</sup> The individual with a college degree has a 3.5 times lower poverty rate and can expect to earn an additional \$900,000 in lifetime earnings.<sup>7</sup> These numbers are compelling when evaluating the potential impact of an Individualized Studies major for the second type of student.

#### 4. How will the proposed program benefit students?

It would provide all interested students with greater autonomy, control, and responsibility over their educational experience. It is also expected to enhance retention and reduce educational costs for students.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Carl Straumsheim, "Decision Time," *Inside Higher Ed*, 24 August 2016. (<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/08/24/study-finds-students-benefit-waiting-declare-major>)

<sup>4</sup> EAB, Student Success Collaborative, Graduation Rates for Students Who Switch Majors ([https://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/server\\_files/images/33447\\_EAB\\_Graduation\\_Graph\\_final.png](https://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/server_files/images/33447_EAB_Graduation_Graph_final.png)).

<sup>5</sup> <https://dsu.edu/programs/general-studies-bgs.html>

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey as cited by Elka Torpey, "Education Pays, 2021," *Career Outlook*, June 2021 ( <https://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2021/data-on-display/education-pays.htm> ).

<sup>7</sup> Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities, "How does a college degree improve graduates' employment and earnings potential?" <https://www.aplu.org/projects-and-initiatives/college-costs-tuition-and-financial-aid/publicvalues/employment-earnings.html>

<sup>8</sup> Students frequently report finances as being the major factor in deciding to withdraw from college. While this program will not reduce the cost of individual courses, it will reduce the time needed to complete a degree for many students, thereby potentially saving them tens of thousands of dollars. See Josh Moody, "How to Avoid Dropping out of College," *US News and World Report*, 20 March 2019. <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2019-03-20/dropping-out-of-college-why-students-do-so-and-how-to-avoid-it>

## 5. Program Proposal Rationale:

### A. If a new degree is proposed, what is the rationale?

Not applicable

### B. What is the rationale for the curriculum?

The rationale for this is to enable students to plan and tailor their coursework work to fit their individual educational and occupational goals. Prior to pursuing this major, students will be required to specifically state the courses they intend to take for the Major Requirements of this degree and submit a personal statement (300-word minimum) that explains the relationship between the proposed course work and their post-graduate goals. The essay and course work will be reviewed by the General Studies Director, who will consult with appropriate faculty experts. The Dean of Arts and Sciences will give the final approval for the coursework.

### C. Demonstrate/provide evidence that the curriculum is consistent with current national standards. Complete the tables below and explain any unusual aspects of the proposed curriculum?

The table below highlights how each individual student's program of study is unique. See also Appendix A, which delineates the guidelines and approval process that each student is required to submit. At least twenty-one of the 42 to 60 Major Requirements need to be 300 or 400 level courses. The remaining Free Elective credits can be 100 to 400 level courses. These requirements are comparable to Individualized Studies majors at regional institutions.<sup>9</sup>

### D. Summary of the degree program (complete the following tables):

Individualized Major	Credit Hours	Percent
System General Education Requirements	30	25%
Major Requirements	48	40%
Free Electives	42	35%
Degree Total	120	100%

### Required Support Courses Outside the Major

None

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<sup>9</sup> These include Southwest Minnesota State University, Metropolitan State University, University of Minnesota-Crookston, University of Minnesota-Duluth, University of Minnesota-Morris, University of North Dakota, Montana State, Eastern Wyoming College, and Central Wyoming College.

**Major Requirements**

Prefix	Number	Course Title (add or delete rows as needed)	Credit Hours	New (yes, no)
CSC	105	Introduction to Computers	3	No
Choose one course from the following three courses			3	
CIS	123	Problem Solving and Programming		No
CIS	130	Visual Basic Programming		No
CSC	150	Computer Science I		No
300-499		Depending upon student's individualized program of study	21*	No
100-499		Depending upon student's individualized program of study	18*	No
GS	491	Independent Study: Capstone	3	No
Total			48	

See Appendix A for addition requirements for the 39 credits above.

**Major Electives: List courses available as electives in the program. Indicate any proposed new courses added specifically for the major.**

None

## 6. Student Outcomes and Demonstration of Individual Achievement

- A. What specific knowledge and competencies, including technology competencies, will all students demonstrate before graduation?** *The knowledge and competencies should be specific to the program and not routinely expected of all university graduates, and must relate to the proposed assessments in B and C below. Complete the table below to list specific learning outcomes—knowledge and competencies—for courses in the proposed program in each row. Label each column heading with a course prefix and number. Indicate required courses with an asterisk (\*). Indicate with an X in the corresponding table cell for any student outcomes that will be met by the courses included. All students should acquire the program knowledge and competencies regardless of the electives selected. Modify the table as necessary to provide the requested information for the proposed program.*

Students will be expected to demonstrate proficiency in oral and written communication skills, scholarly writing skills, problem-solving skills, critical thinking skills, and computer literacy. These skills will be achieved primarily through their General Education classes, as the tables below highlight. The GS 491 Capstone/ Seminar class will also provide students with opportunities to strengthen their oral and written communication skills and scholarly writing skills, along with their problem-solving and critical thinking skills. In addition, the GS 491 course will ensure that students can effectively market themselves for their desired employment or continuing educational goals.

Students will also be expected to have the knowledge and skills necessary to seek employment or to pursue additional education in their desired disciplinary field(s). When students plan their course of study for this degree, the General Studies Director, their advisor, and/or faculty experts will ensure that students are selecting course work that will give them the knowledge and skills necessary (as outlined in their personal statement which explains the relationship between their proposed course work and their post-graduate goals) to do this.

<b>Individual Student Outcome</b> (Same as in the text of the proposal)	Program Courses that Address the Outcomes					
	CMST 101	ENGL 101	ENGL 201	GS 491	CSC 105	CIS 123, CIS 130, or CSC 150
Demonstrate effective oral and written communication	X	X	X	X		
Demonstrate problem-solving and critical thinking skills				X	X	X
Be knowledgeable and proficient in computer literacy.					X	X
Demonstrate their proficiency in scholarly writing and applying conventions of appropriate style manuals (MLS, APA, ASA).			X	X		
Demonstrate proficiency in marketing themselves for employment which fits their professional and career goals.				X		
Additional learning outcome(s): <sup>10</sup>						

*Modify the table as necessary to include all student outcomes. Outcomes in this table are to be the same ones identified in the text.*

**B. Are national instruments (i.e., examinations) available to measure individual student achievement in this field? If so, list them.**

None.

**C. How will individual students demonstrate mastery? Describe the specific examinations and/or processes used, including any external measures (including national exams, externally evaluated portfolios, or student activities, etc.). What are the consequences for students who do not demonstrate mastery?**

Discussion and assessment of the student's progress in the Individualized Studies major will be done with the student's advisor, faculty experts in the student's discipline area(s), and the General Studies Director throughout the duration of the degree program. This will ensure that students are mastering the content that they have elected to pursue and that they are becoming proficient with their oral and written communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. If it is determined that a student is not making progress in their chosen disciplinary field(s), or if they are having issues with communication, critical thinking, or problem-solving skills, modifications in the course of study will be made (if appropriate or possible); the student may be asked to change to the Bachelor of General

<sup>10</sup> Any additional learning outcome(s) will need to be approved by the General Studies Director when the Individualized Studies major proposal is first approved. See Appendix A.

Studies degree where they would have flexibility in course selection and not need to complete their proscribed Individualized Studies curriculum; or in extreme instances, it may be deemed that other educational programs, i.e., vocational, may be more appropriate for the student to pursue.

**7. What instructional approaches and technologies will instructors use to teach courses in the program?**

Due to the variety of courses required, and the unique nature of each student's degree program, individual students will be exposed to a wide range of teaching methods, such as lecture, discussion, project-based, experiential, and online, depending upon their degree focus and interests. In addition, students will be exposed to the latest technology in their classes, and the facilities and equipment in the Madison Cyber Labs, will also be available to them.

**8. Did the University engage any developmental consultants to assist with the development of the curriculum? Did the University consult any professional or accrediting associations during the development of the curriculum? What were the contributions of the consultants and associations to the development of curriculum?**

Several universities offer Individualized Studies programs, which we used as models in designing this proposal. Additionally, we consulted with Dr. Brian Newsome, Dean of the John E. Sallstrom Honors College at Georgia College. Dr. Newsome has experience designing an Individualized Studies program and provided insight on this proposal as it relates to DSU and the existing Bachelor of General Studies degree.

**9. Are students enrolling in the program expected to be new to the university or redirected from other existing programs at the university? Complete the table below and explain the methodology used in developing the estimates (replace "XX" in the table with the appropriate year). If question 12 includes a request for authorization for off-campus or distance delivery, add lines to the table for off-campus/distance students, credit hours, and graduates.**

While it is possible that highly motivated students may choose to come to DSU because of the freedom to design their own degree, it is anticipated that the large majority will be redirected from other existing programs at the university.

We currently have 49 students enrolled in the General Studies program. Of these, 22 have earned more than 100 credit hours, several of whom will be unable to complete the existing General Studies requirements within a semester. In addition, 10 of the 49 General Studies students have already earned more than 120 credits, the amount typically required for graduation. If these students had been allowed to create an individualized major, they may have been able to graduate in a timely fashion. Furthermore, there are undoubtedly students that are enrolled in a major that they find unsatisfying and yet feel that there are no options available for them. Thus, it is possible that we have as many as 10 to 15 students complete an Individualized Studies major each year.

	Fiscal Years*			
	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>
<i>Estimates</i>	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25
Students new to the university	1	2	3	4
Students from other university programs	1	5	5	5

Continuing students		2	9	16
=Total students in the program (fall)		9	16	25
Graduates				5

\*Do not include current fiscal year.

\*\*This is the total number of credit hours generated by students in the program in the required or elective program courses. Use the same numbers in Appendix B – Budget.

**10. Is program accreditation available? If so, identify the accrediting organization and explain whether accreditation is required or optional, the resources required, and the University's plans concerning the accreditation of this program.**

Not at this time

**11. Does the University request any exceptions to any Board policy for this program? Explain any requests for exceptions to Board Policy.**

None

**12. Delivery Location**

*Note: The accreditation requirements of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) require Board approval for a university to offer programs off-campus and through distance delivery.*

**A. Complete the following charts to indicate if the university seeks authorization to deliver the entire program on campus, at any off-campus location (e.g., USD Community Center for Sioux Falls, Black Hills State University-Rapid City, Capital City Campus, etc.) or deliver the entire program through distance technology (e.g., as an online program)?**

	Yes/No	Intended Start Date
On campus	Yes	Fall 2022

	Yes/No	If Yes, list location(s)	Intended Start Date
Off campus	No		Choose an item. Choose an item.

	Yes/No	If Yes, identify delivery methods <i>Delivery methods are defined in <a href="#">AAC Guideline 5.5</a>.</i>	Intended Start Date
Distance Delivery (online/other distance delivery methods)	No		Choose an item. Choose an item.
Does another BOR institution already have authorization to offer the program online?	No	If yes, identify institutions:	

**B. Complete the following chart to indicate if the university seeks authorization to deliver more than 50% but less than 100% of the program through distance learning (e.g., as an online program)? This question responds to HLC definitions for distance delivery.**

	Yes/No	If Yes, identify delivery methods	Intended Start Date
<b>Distance Delivery (online/other distance delivery methods)</b>	No		Choose an item. Choose an item.

**13. Cost, Budget, and Resources: Explain the amount and source(s) of any one-time and continuing investments in personnel, professional development, release time, time redirected from other assignments, instructional technology & software, other operations and maintenance, facilities, etc., needed to implement the proposed major. Address off-campus or distance delivery separately. Complete Appendix B – Budget and briefly summarize to support Board staff analysis.**

Any approved individualized plan of study must consist of existing and regularly scheduled courses. For this reason, this major requires no new courses, no additional faculty for this major, and no additional instructional technology or software requirements. Advising assignments will be handled in accordance with established practices, ensuring that no single faculty member is overburdened or is given released time. We anticipate the students that graduate in this major are current students and we do not expect redirecting any recruiting resources. For all these reasons, the anticipated cost of this program is zero. By helping students find an appropriate major and remaining at DSU, this proposed major will keep tuition revenue within the institution.

	Development/ Start-up	Long-term Operation
Reallocate existing resources	No	No
Apply for external resources <i>If checking this box, please provide examples of the external funding identified below.</i>	No	No
Ask Board to seek new State resources <i>Note that requesting the Board to seek new State resources may require additional planning and is dependent upon the Board taking action to make the funding request part of their budget priorities. Universities intending to ask the Board for new State resources for a program should contact the Board office prior to submitting the intent to plan.</i>	No	No
Ask Board to approve a new or increased student fee	No	No

**14. Is the university requesting or intending to request permission for a new fee or to attach an existing fee to the program (place an "X" in the appropriate box)? If yes, explain.**

☐ Yes      ☒ No

*Explanation (if applicable):*

**15. New Course Approval: New courses required to implement the new undergraduate degree program may receive approval in conjunction with program approval or receive approval separately. Please check the appropriate statement:**

- ☐ YES,  
*the university is seeking approval of new courses related to the proposed program in conjunction with program approval. All New Course Request forms are included as Appendix C and match those described in section 5D.*
- ☒ NO,  
*the university is not seeking approval of all new courses related to the proposed program in conjunction with program approval; the institution will submit new course approval requests separately or at a later date in accordance with Academic Affairs Guidelines.*

**16. Additional Information:** *Additional information is optional. Use this space to provide pertinent information not requested above. Limit the number and length of additional attachments. Identify all attachments with capital letters. Letters of support are not necessary and are rarely included with Board materials. The University may include responses to questions from the Board or the Executive Director as appendices to the original proposal where applicable. Delete this item if not used.*

See Appendix A below.

## APPENDIX A: GUIDELINES AND APPROVAL

### Individualized Studies Major Guidelines

Students at DSU have the opportunity to propose an Individualized Studies major. This option should only be pursued if the student's interests and professional goals cannot be adequately met with one of our existing majors. The student, in consultation with the General Studies Director, is responsible for designing a course of study that is academically rigorous and sufficiently focused. The General Studies Director can and should consult with other faculty on campus in evaluating each Individualized Studies major proposal. Additionally, each proposal must include the following:

1. A personal statement (300-word minimum) that explains the relationship between the proposed major and the applicant's post-graduate goals.
2. An outline of the courses the student intends to complete, totaling a minimum of 48 credit hours.
  - a. At least 21 credit hours must be at the 300- or 400- levels.
  - b. No more than 24 credit-hours can be within the same discipline.
  - c. Must include GS 491 - Independent Study: Capstone.
  - d. Must include CSC 150 Introduction to Computers
  - e. Must include CIS 123, CIS 130, or CSC 150.

Students cannot propose an individualized major necessitating certification by an external accrediting body. Upon formal approval by the Dean of Arts and Sciences, Registration and Records will officially update the student's academic record with the Individualized Studies major. Once approved, any modification to the Individualized Studies major must be approved using the normal processes (course substitution form, etc.).

In addition to the course requirements for the Individualized Studies major, students must complete all other requirements for graduation as listed in the published DSU Undergraduate Catalogue.