

Create Your Own Major!

**Interdisciplinary
Studies**

Towson University

**Individually Designed Thematic
Option**

Student Information Packet



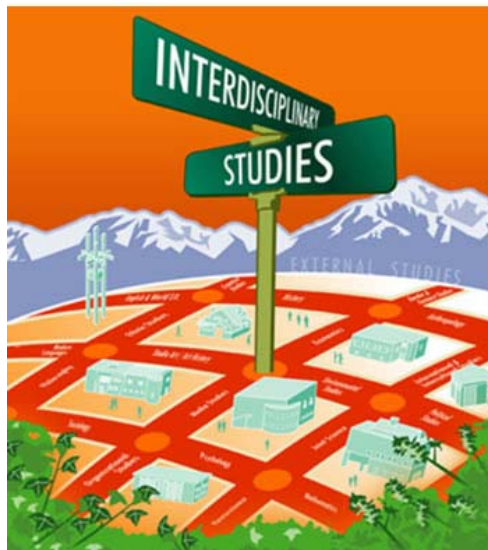
Individually Designed Thematic Option Interdisciplinary Studies Major

Interdisciplinary Studies is the only program at Towson University authorized to help you design a major tailored to your own interests. If the major you are looking for is not offered at Towson University, yet you find that many courses offered by TU focus on your interests, then the IDIS Individually Designed Thematic Option might be for you.

Are you a person with a natural curiosity in several fields of study? Have you wondered how you could tie together your varied interests into a formal degree program? If so, this program could help you to achieve your goals. An IDIS-Thematic Option (IDIS-TO) major requires perseverance, initiative and thoughtfulness. It is an excellent alternative for those who enjoy setting high standards for themselves, who want courses and other learning experiences to be personally meaningful, and who really are ready to do the thinking and consultation needed to design their own degree major. With the IDIS-TO, you can explore your interests in emerging fields and go beyond the limits of traditional departments.

Director of Interdisciplinary Studies: This is your initial contact and major resource person:

Dr. James E. DiLisio
Director of Interdisciplinary Studies
College of Liberal Arts
Linthicum Hall 108
Towson University
Towson, Maryland 21252
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Interdisciplinary Studies is at "The Crossroads of Learning"

INTRODUCTION

If you have made the decision to design an individualized program of study, you are starting a challenging and rewarding process. Formulating an IDIS-TO curriculum is a serious endeavor that will take planning, reflection, information, and time. This project cannot be adequately done over a weekend. It is a developmental process, which may take several weeks, or longer, to complete. The key is to begin early and to fully utilize the resources that are available to you. Your goal is to articulate how the different disciplines which are part of your concentration can be integrated and synthesized as the product of your degree program.

This packet of information should be helpful in this process. Please read it thoroughly. You will probably need to read it several times. Do not be afraid to highlight sections or jot down notes or questions in the margins. Do not hesitate to call for an appointment to discuss your questions with the Director of IDIS, Dr. James DiLisio. You can make an appointment by calling the College of Liberal Arts Administrative Assistant, Mrs. Bonnie Alexander at 410-704-2128 or balexander@towson.edu. Some of your simpler questions may be communicated to Dr. DiLisio via email.

You may seek either the Bachelor of Arts (BA) or Bachelor of Science (BS) degree through IDIS. Students whose IDIS-TO program is focused on the social sciences or humanities usually seek the BA. Students seeking the BA must complete two years of a foreign language (through the intermediate 200 level). For further information on the language requirement, see the *Towson University Undergraduate Catalog*, “BA degree” and also the Department of Foreign Languages. If the primary components of your IDIS-TO program are science courses or from the professional schools (College of Business & Economics, College of Education, College of Health Professions, and perhaps College of Fine Arts & Communications) then you would usually seek the BS. Requirements for the BA and BS are the same with the exception of the foreign language requirement for the BA. In order to be graduated from Towson University, you must:

- complete the General Education Requirements
- complete a major
- have a minimum 2.0 GPA
- complete a minimum of 120 course units
- complete at least 32 course units at the 300 and 400 level

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

- A formally approved program of study consisting of a minimum of 45 course units in the major.
- At least 21 of these course units must be taken after formal approval of the program of study.
- The required 45 course units must include courses from at least three different disciplines or programs.
- All course units must be upper-division (300-400 level) unless the faculty advisor and the Director of Interdisciplinary Studies approve the inclusion of some

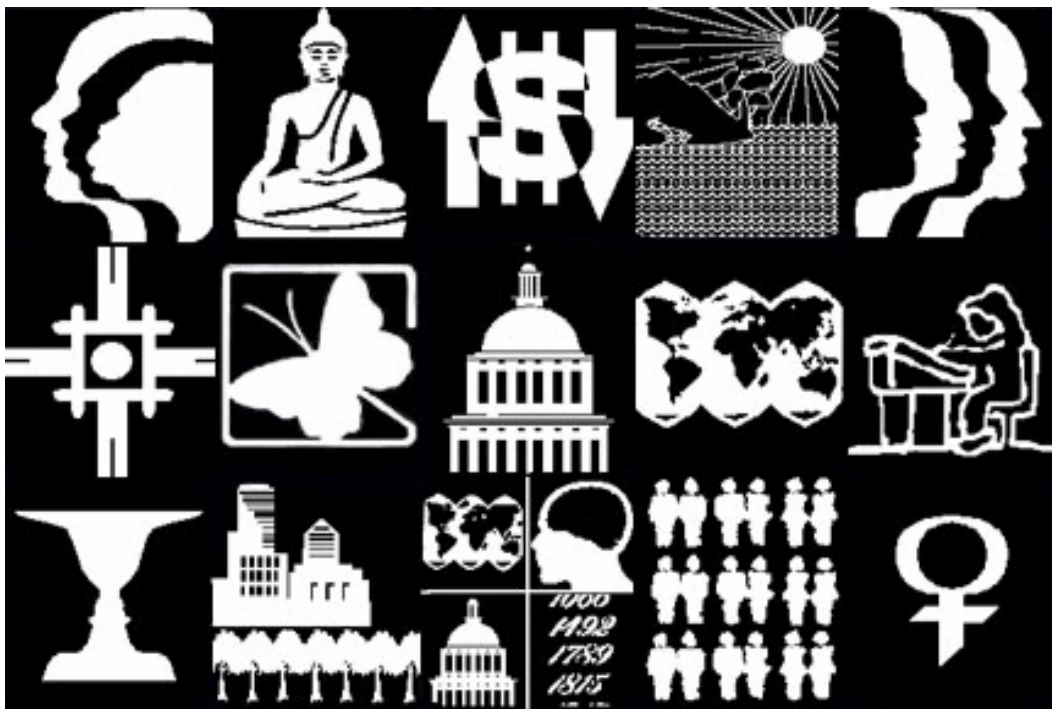
particularly significant course work at the lower division level (100-200). For example, a course important to the thematic option may exist only at the lower division.

PLANNING YOUR PROGRAM

- In order to be officially admitted to the IDIS-TO, you must submit a planned program of study proposal for review. This plan is called the IDIS-TO Proposal.
- The initial step is to schedule an appointment with the Director of IDIS to discuss your plans.
- The next step is to examine curricula at other universities to find programs similar to the program you are designing. This can be done by an internet search. See which courses they require. See if those courses are offered at Towson University. You will need this information when you meet with your faculty advisor to plan out your program.
- Go through the Towson University Undergraduate Catalog and highlight all the courses you think may help you or which you find interesting. If in doubt, circle the course. You can cut down the list later. It might be helpful to go through this process with your faculty advisor.
- Call agencies or companies that might employ you after you graduate, and ask about the type of person they hire, the job market outlook, salary ranges, opportunities for advancement, etc.
- If you plan to go on to graduate or professional school, find out the criteria for admission. Talk to faculty or graduate program directors.
- Read as much as you can about the field(s) or intellectual issues you are interested in.
- Find a faculty sponsor in one of the disciplines that your program will focus on. Discuss your ideas with your potential sponsor. Ask for advice on your career choice and which classes to take. The IDIS Office can help you find a sponsor/advisor, but you are encouraged to choose a professor with whom you are comfortable and wish to work. A good choice for a faculty sponsor/advisor might be a professor who teaches some of the courses which are part of your program or professors who advise students in the disciplines involved within your concentration area.
- Discuss your ideas with any of the following: parents, friends, spouse, Director of IDIS, someone in your field, professors, and clergy if you desire.
- The IDIS-TO Proposal needs to be approved by your faculty advisor/sponsor.
- The Director of IDIS will then read your IDIS-TO Proposal. The Director may accept, reject, or require modification of your proposal.
- When the IDIS-TO Proposal is acceptable to the student, faculty advisor, and Director of IDIS, then all three sign and date it. At that point a **new personalized major has been created!** The proposal now becomes the student's plan of study and has the force of a contract between the student and Towson University.

In designing your program, keep the following things in mind:

- There are three types of courses in most IDIS-TO concentrations: those you have already taken, those you know you will need, and some that will round out your program. Allow yourself flexibility in the “rounding out” areas by listing alternatives on your program sheet.
- There are sometimes good reasons for not deciding all the specific courses you want to take. You may be quite sure about a very broad area of interest—but not feel ready to choose all of your courses. In some areas, new courses are likely to appear. In such cases, the final decision may be postponed by listing, for example, “9 course units of approved Biology (BIOL) courses.”
- In the event that a course listed on your program of study is no longer offered or is not available for any reason, then you may meet with your advisor to select a replacement. All program changes must be communicated to the Director of IDIS for approval and recording in your file of record. The program in your file will be used in the final assessment for graduation.



HOW TO ORGANIZE YOUR CURRICULUM

How to List Courses on Your IDIS-TO Program Proposal

- all proposals **must be typed**
- if you are using courses transferred from another institution, put the name of each institution on the form with the other course information
- Transfer courses that have been evaluated as equivalent to specific TU courses should be listed using the TU department, course number, title, number of course units awarded, and abbreviation of name of institution where taken.
- TU courses should be listed by department abbreviation, course number, title, number of course units
- If the course has already been completed, put a X in the completed column

Program title, description, and goals

- **The title** you select for your IDIS-TO program should be an accurate, concise, meaningful phrase describing the career objective or academic field you are pursuing. The title **cannot duplicate any existing major at TU**. The title should reflect the focus and major areas of study, e.g. “Dance Management”, “Art Journalism”, “Global Studies”, “Criminal Justice Spatial Analysis.” Do not choose a title that does not reflect the nature of your program, e.g. “Inspiration Studies”, “Free Spirit”
- **Description:** This section is intended to be both a description of the nature of your program as well as a justification. You have selected courses from at least three disciplines to define your specific field. IDIS wants to be sure you have chosen these courses wisely and that the courses you have selected will adequately prepare you for this field. A short statement on each discipline you are including and how the disciplines relate to your goals and to each other should be included. Describe why it is not appropriate for you to major in one of the disciplines you have included, and why the combination provides a different approach and viewpoint.
- **Goals/Objectives:** You should state at least three goals/objectives of your program of study. Where do you want this program to take you? What are your career goals? Do you want this program to connect directly into a job opportunity, or to graduate school? What do you want to get out of the program? In addition to the content of cognate fields, you should also consider goals such as improving public speaking ability, improving writing ability, learning how to plan and conduct research, etc.

WORKING WITH YOUR FACULTY ADVISOR

- A key factor in developing a strong program that will help you attain your goals is working closely with your faculty advisor. Every IDIS-TO student must have a faculty advisor who represents a discipline in the program of study. The advisor is to provide input and guidance in the selection of your courses. Your advisor will also be the person you see each semester prior to registering. Only your advisor can remove the “hold” on your file before you are allowed to register. You faculty

advisor must be a full-time professor at TU (any exceptions must be requested by the student and reviewed by the Director of IDIS for approval).

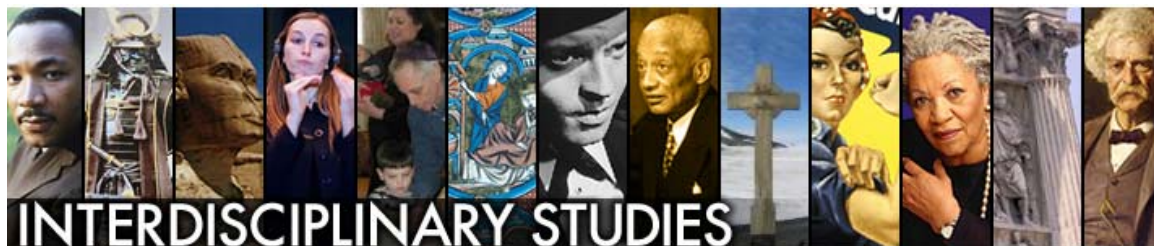
- Ultimately, your faculty advisor must endorse your curriculum-program of study. Make sure you maintain on-going contact with your faculty advisor to seek advice.
- It is important to allow your faculty advisor sufficient time to review your file and hold meaningful advising sessions with you. This cannot be done if you call at the last minute to discuss courses for the upcoming semester. Remember, your faculty advisor has many other responsibilities; they are not compensated for serving as your faculty advisor, and do so because they are committed to students. The signature of your faculty advisor is required on your final program of study. Your faculty advisor may be consulted by the Director of IDIS at the time of your graduation requirements review.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Initially, the process of creating an IDIS-TO proposal may seem a bit overwhelming. More than likely, this is because it is the first time you have attempted to do something like this. Remember, start early, utilize the many resources that are available to you, and be willing to commit the time it takes to develop a strong individualized curriculum of study. Most students find that as they follow the guidelines of this packet and work on each part of the proposal, it begins to take shape piece by piece. Keep in mind that this is YOUR major, created by YOU with guidance from your advisor and the Director of IDIS, and it is the credential that will identify YOU as you seek future employment, apply for graduate school, and continue your professional development.



The Director and staff of IDIS are ready to help you get started on this exciting adventure! The final section of this packet is a two page simplified guide to preparing your program of study. It is **required that you follow the format** outlined in this guide. Our best wishes as you pursue your self-defined program of study.



INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

Individually Designed Thematic Major Option

The ***Individually Designed Thematic Option*** provides students with the opportunity to complete a major that is available at other colleges or universities, but not currently offered at Towson University. Insofar as it is individually designed, this option places special responsibilities on students.

- 1) Students are responsible for:
 - finding a model for the major they wish to pursue in the catalog of another university,
 - determining that TU offers the courses necessary to complete the major, and
 - meeting with the Director of Interdisciplinary Studies to discuss their proposal.The Director will ask for a copy of the model used for their major and a brief written description of their intended plan of study.
- 2) With the assistance of the Director, students identify a professor with expertise in the area of their proposed major who is willing to serve as their adviser.
- 3) Under the guidance of the major adviser, students write a plan of study that includes the name of the individually designed thematic option, a description of its goals, and a list of required and elective courses. (See template on reverse of this sheet.)

The successful completion of an individually designed plan of study requires that:

- 45 units are directly related to the academic theme or area of study defined in the plan of study,
- at least 21 of these units are taken ***after*** formal approval of the plan of study,
- courses are drawn from at least three TU departments or programs, and
- all 45 units are on the upper (300-400) level. The Interdisciplinary Studies Director, in consultation with the major adviser, can approve the inclusion of no more than nine units from the lower (100-200) level.

All individually designed programs must be approved/signed by the Director of the Interdisciplinary Studies Program and the faculty adviser. After formal approval, this agreement will constitute the requirements of the students' major. ***No unapproved plan of study may be used for graduation.***

Students interested in this option should declare their major as soon as possible, ideally no later than the first term of the junior year.

***Contact: Director, Interdisciplinary Studies
LI108, 410-704-2128***

**TEMPLATE
PROPOSED PLAN OF STUDY
Individually Designed Thematic Option
INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES**

Student Name: _____

Student ID# _____

TITLE:

DESCRIPTION:

GOALS: (Minimum of 2-3.)

PROPOSED CLASSES

(45 upper-level units from at least three different departments or programs.)

	Name	Number	Units	Completed
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				

APPROVAL:

INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES DIRECTOR:

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

FACULTY ADVISER:

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Name & Department: _____

STUDENT:

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

(Include a copy of the program that serves as a model for your proposal.)