Directed Interdisciplinary Studies

Introduction to the D.I.S. program

The Directed Interdisciplinary Studies (D.I.S.) degree is for undergraduates who want to pursue an area of scholarly/creative inquiry that falls outside the established departmental structure and existing degree programs at MSU. The D.I.S. degree integrates at least three academic disciplines, as identified by the student and approved by the student’s Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC). A “discipline” can be a current program offered at MSU, but it need not be disciplines can span departments and/or include courses or programs at other institutions.

The FAC members will represent the student’s academic disciplines and will work collaboratively with the student and D.I.S. Director to design and approve coursework and an independent research or creative project to address the intersection of the student’s interests. Each D.I.S. degree curriculum has the potential to be uniquely suited to each individual student. The student, with approval by the FAC, will determine whether the degree will be designated as a B.S. or a B.A., depending on the specific combination of academic disciplines for their degree.

The D.I.S. program is not intended as an exploratory experience for students who are undecided about choosing a major; rather, the program is for independently-driven students that have a directed goal that requires interdisciplinarity. Such a skillset can be highly valuable for futures in entrepreneurship, leadership, medical school, law school, and many other interdisciplinary fields. We expect students graduating with a D.I.S degree to have cultivated the following (outcomes of the D.I.S program):

1. Learn three specific technical skills related to disciplines of focus
2. Use consilience to solve complex interdisciplinary problems
3. Build project management skills
4. Communicate and collaborate across disparate communities
5. Develop a professional network
6. Produce a professional, scholarly product related to the D.I.S. project

Students may formally apply for admission to the D.I.S. program no earlier than the second semester of their freshman year. Students interested in pursuing a D.I.S. degree are encouraged to schedule a meeting to discuss their plans with the D.I.S. Program Director. The D.I.S. Oversight Board members are also great resources who are familiar with the program. Prospective students can reach out to them with questions about potential mentors or specific fields of interest.

Requirements of a D.I.S. Course Curriculum:

A minimum of 120 semester credit hours are required for graduation.

- 30 credit hours per academic discipline are required for a minimum of 90 semester hours of D.I.S. coursework.
- 62 credit hours of D.I.S. course work are required at the Upper Division level (300 or 400), including 18 credits in each discipline, and 8 credits devoted to your project (490R). HONR 494 Honors Seminars may also be included in the D.I.S. curriculum.
- HONR 201US and HONR 202IH (Texts and Critics: Knowledge and Imagination) or HONR 301US (Text and Critics for transfer students or students who enter the program late in their academic careers) are required.
- 8 credit hours devoted to the D.I.S. Research/Creative Project are required. These credits can be taken from HONR 490R Honors Thesis or Departmental 490R courses. At the discretion of the FAC, Independent Study or Thesis courses from other departments may count toward this requirement.

Upon successful completion of their thesis defense, students will be required to present their D.I.S. Research/Creative Project in a public forum.

The Course Plan must be designed and approved by the FAC. Students will not be awarded a D.I.S. Degree unless they have also satisfied the Montana State University Core Curriculum requirements.

To Apply:
The D.I.S. degree is open to all students at Montana State University. To apply for admission, students must submit an academic transcript (3.5 minimum GPA) and two letters of recommendation attesting to the motivation of the applicant and their ability to work independently, along with the essay questions and Research/Project Proposal. Successful applicants will be granted admission to the Honors College at Montana State University.

Contact
Please contact the Honors College for any questions about the D.I.S. program (honors@montana.edu).