

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

Information for Prospective D.I.S Students

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. The Board currently consists of,

- Mr. Steven Davis, Honors College Assistant Dean, steven.davis2@montana.edu (logan.schultz@montana.edu)
- Dr. Jeffrey Heys, Associate Dean of Research, Economic Development and Graduate Education, Norm Asbjornson College of Engineering (NACOE) (jeffrey.hey@montana.edu) (ilsemarilee@montana.edu)
- Dr. Ann Bertagnolli (Honors, abertagnolli@montana.edu)
- Dr. Ben Leubner (English, leubnerb@gmail.com)
- Dr. Graham Austin (Business - Marketing, caroline.austin@montana.edu)
- Jim Zimpel (Arts and Architecture, james.zimpel@montana.edu)
- Dr. Mitchell Vaterlaus (Health and Human Development, j.vaterlaus@montana.edu)
- Dr. Michael Reidy (History and Philosophy, michaelseanreidy@gmail.com)

- Dr. Craig Carr (Animal and Range Sciences, craig.carr@montana.edu)

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, with a minimum of 15 credits in each discipline at the Upper Division level (300 or 400). Honors Upper-Level Seminars may 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 (HONR 490R) are required with at least 1 credit taken in the student's last semester before graduation.
- 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.

- Meet with the D.I.S. Director and your FAC
 - Finalize Course Plan based on FAC advice
 - Adjust Project Proposal based on FAC recommendation
- Submit all parts of the application to honors@montana.edu, including
 - Current academic transcript
 - Two letters of recommendation, sent directly to honors@montana.edu.
 - D.I.S. Application Form, (https://www.montana.edu/honors/documents/DIS_Application_2019.pdf) signed by FAC members
 - D.I.S. Course Plan Worksheet (https://www.montana.edu/honors/documents/DIS_Coursework_wksht.pdf)

Application materials are due March 1st as a priority deadline. Applications will be reviewed by the D.I.S. Oversight Board. Interviews will be held in middle or late March, and applicants will be notified of their status in time to register for fall classes. Students will be admitted based on the strength of their written application, academic record, letters of recommendation and personal interview. If students are not selected for the D.I.S. program, they may reapply at any time.

Information for Current D.I.S. students

Once accepted, students must complete a D.I.S. Contract (https://www.montana.edu/honors/documents/DIS_Contract.pdf), and all D.I.S. students are expected to attend monthly D.I.S. meetings.

To help stay on track, students can consult the Current D.I.S. Student Checklist. (https://www.montana.edu/honors/documents/Current_DIS_Student_Checklist.pdf)

To **register for courses**, students receive their PIN from the Honors College office.

If a **course change** must be made to the planned curriculum for a justified reason, such as course availability, students must complete the D.I.S. Course Amendment Form (https://www.montana.edu/honors/documents/DIS_Course_Amendment.pdf), for approval by the D.I.S. Director and faculty advisor in that discipline.

Prior to graduating, students should submit their project thesis to their FAC and Director, to be reviewed prior to scheduling a defense presentation. The defense presentation is an opportunity to discuss your project in a flexible format to a general audience, and should be available to the public. Please communicate with the D.I.S. Director prior to scheduling a defense.

Information for Faculty Advisors

- The role of a Faculty Advisor can vary widely, based on the specific advising needs of the student. For example, all advisors do not need to be heavily involved in the student's project.
- During the application process, Faculty Advisors should help the student refine their project with milestones, assessments, and clear deliverables. The advisors should also help design a curriculum sufficient to complete the proposed project.
- Each semester, the student is responsible for arranging a meeting with their FAC to discuss progress, setbacks, and any necessary amendments to the curriculum or project.
- In the student's final semester, they will present their project at a defense, which should be open to the public. Faculty advisors are expected to attend.

Contact

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