

### **Worksheet for Planning an Individual Major (or any major)**

This worksheet does not follow point-for-point the CIS major proposal format. Instead, it is meant to help you think through what you want from a major, how you might design an individual major, and how best to explain to yourself and others your educational goals and the purpose and structure of your major.

As you consider the following questions, continue to discuss your proposed major with your adviser, the director of CIS, and whomever else you think might be helpful. Then you can use your ideas, and other people's responses to them, to build a strong proposal for an individual major.

There are no right answers to these questions, only your answers. In fact, for you these might not even be all the right questions! If other questions arise that seem to you to be equally important, note them down for yourself as well.

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An individual major includes 10 or more full course equivalents, at least 2 of which must be advanced work (usually Level III), plus an additional 2 Level III credits for the senior integrative project. As you plan your course of study for your junior and senior years, consider:

- Will you have fulfilled most of your GE requirements by the end of your sophomore year? If not, what's still to be completed? Are there courses that fulfill GE requirements and fit into your major? Look especially for an EIN course and WRI courses that will serve your major.
- From which departments or programs will you select on-campus courses for your major? Have you done introductory level work in those areas?
- What academic or other work have you done so far that might be part of your planned major?
- Do you plan to take a semester or interim in an off-campus program? How will that experience fit into your major?
- Are you planning to include one or more internships, independent study/research or other independent experiences in your major? What would your ideal independent experience include?
- What courses or other study/learning experiences have faculty or others recommended that you might include? How do you think those recommendations fit into your plan?

What major(s) were you considering when you began at St. Olaf? Why is that no longer your choice? Can you achieve your educational goals by adding something to an existing major? Have you considered the interdisciplinary program majors or concentrations?

What will you integrate in your individual major?

Types of learning experience? Disciplines? Means of inquiry? Modes of expression? Other?

What (besides you, of course) is the integrating factor in your major?

A question? A topic? An area of study? A phenomenon? A methodology? Other?

What is the main idea of your major? How will you describe it to fellow students, your family, a faculty member, your summer employer, a former high school teacher?

What might be a satisfying and effective senior integrative project for your major? What are your most satisfying ways to collect new information, organize and make sense of it, present it?

- What would be your focus? The project's role in your major?
- What form might your project take?  
Lab research? Art work? Research paper? Bibliography? Community program? Creative writing portfolio? Survey? Performance? Critical analysis? Invention? Something else?
- How might you present your finished project, both publicly and for evaluation?  
Public reading? Classroom presentation? Web site? Demonstration? Exhibit? Publication? Poster session? Recital? Something else?

You will need support for your proposal from a faculty member who agrees to act as your academic adviser in general and for your individual major, and to supervise your senior integrative project. Sometimes students also recruit a second faculty member to provide extra support or expertise in a particular area of the major.

Consider:

- Is your current adviser the person you want to advise your major?
- In what areas of study will you want to work with faculty? Think both generally (departmental) and specifically (possible independent study).
- With whom do you think you can work successfully?
- Will he/she/they be on campus during both your junior and senior years?

You will be asked to find out what library resources are available for your major, and to consult with a librarian about research strategies. Do you know how to find materials relevant to your area of study? What are the best sources to find materials in your area? What is available on campus? Elsewhere? Have you had a "library instruction" session as part of any previous class?

How might you begin a web portfolio? Do you imagine a statement of philosophy? A perspective to share? Do you have existing work that you might include? What connects those pieces, either to each other or to your major? What links do you hope to discover as you work on your major?

And a final couple of things to think about:

What inspires you to undertake an individual major? What experiences have you had in working independently? What triumphs or difficulties have you encountered? What can you, and others, do to help you achieve your educational goals?

Do you think your individual major makes good use of the college's resources? Will you be able to take advantage of what is available in the current curriculum? Are you planning to work in a very specific area? To work in several different disciplines? What are you hoping for from faculty?