

Independently Designed Major Student Handbook

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What is the Independently Designed Major?

A liberal arts education is a process of learning to ask and answer complex questions. The Independently Designed Major (IDM) allows highly motivated and self-directed students to pursue the questions about which they are most passionate when those questions cannot be pursued in the context of existing CC majors.

IDM students epitomize the intentional intellectual engagement at the core of a liberal arts education. The IDM requires that students articulate the major concepts, theories, and methods that will frame and give shape to their own process of inquiry. The IDM is also explicitly interdisciplinary in nature. IDM students are expected to put at least two disciplines into meaningful conversation with one another, as well as to synthesize and apply knowledge gained to a question or problem of unique interest to them.

Part of our goal in supporting the IDM is to facilitate the journey of students who chose this path during their time at Colorado College and foster a culture of interdisciplinary learners. We do this by providing support and opportunities for growth, including research stipends and regularly scheduled events for all IDM students to attend. This is an ongoing mission that will continue to grow alongside the IDM program for years to come.

Staff

The Independently Designed Major is overseen by the Director of the IDM and Associate Vice President for Student Success

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Major Requirements

Although all IDM students craft a unique plan of study during the IDM application process, all majors must meet the following requirements:

- A minimum of 12 units or a maximum of 15 units may be counted toward the IDM.
- A maximum of 4 units at the 100-course level can be counted toward the major. Language courses at the 100 level cannot be counted as part of the major.
- A minimum of 10 units designated must be at the 200-course number level or above.
- Courses should be progressively more rigorous and complex (i.e. 200, 300, and 400 level courses). Through the plan of study, it should be clear that the student is prepared to take all upper division courses.
- A minimum of 2 methodology/theory courses should be taken, one from each disciplinary foundation.
- A minimum of 1 unit of General Studies thesis courses: GS 400 or GS401.

In addition to the coursework on a student's plan of study approved by the Curriculum Executive Committee (CEC), all IDM students will complete the following:

- All appropriate All-College and elective requirements as listed in the Colorado College catalog.
- A minimum grade of 2.0 in each major course.

Academic Policies

Transfer credits

Up to three courses can be transferred from another institution and only one above the 100 level. All courses must be eligible for transfer per the transfer credit guidelines listed on the Registrar's website. Syllabi for each transfer course should be submitted with the proposed plan of study.

Progress reporting

IDM students are required to meet once per academic year with the IDM director to ensure they are making adequate progress toward the degree. It is also expected that the student will meet frequently with both IDM faculty advisors, particularly as they approach the thesis.

Plan of study changes

Students are allowed to add/drop courses from their approved plan of study. To do so, students are required to complete the Plan of Study Change form found on the IDM website, including having both faculty advisors review and approve the changes. The Plan of Study Change form must be completed as soon as students know a change in their plan of study will occur and must be submitted to the IDM director with faculty signatures.

If the IDM director determines that the proposed changes might shift the fundamental nature of the IDM, they will be evaluated by the Curriculum Executive Committee before final approval.

IDM policies

- All IDMs must be approved by the Curriculum Executive Committee.
- The Registrar will designate courses on the student's transcript that constitute the Independently Designed Major.
- All changes to a student's IDM plan of study must be approved by the two faculty advisors and the IDM director. Changes must be submitted in writing, including both faculty advisor signatures, via the IDM plan of study change form.
- IDM students may double major but are required to follow CC guidelines regarding double majoring, which include the following: the CEC must approve the option to double major; in no case may more than three courses within the two majors overlap;

the student must have one advisor in the traditional major and two in the IDM. Students must still complete a separate thesis specifically in the IDM.

- IDM students may petition to have their Associate Advisor or Thesis Advisor be a CC staff member in the event that staff member has expertise related to the student's IDM topic.

Graduating with Distinction

A senior who completes a high-quality senior thesis (grade of A or above), presents it orally at the IDM thesis day or other approved venue (e.g. CSURF, or another CC), has taken only one course in their IDM plan of study as pass/fail, and maintains a ~~high~~ GPA in the major (3.7 or above) will receive Graduation with Distinction.

Recipients of departmental distinction are listed in the Commencement program.

Research Funding Opportunities

Colorado College offers significant funding opportunities for student research. The Independently Designed Major program encourages all students to consider these opportunities to assist in their research, plan of study, or summer internships.

Independently Designed Major Thesis Support

IDM students may apply for up to \$500 of funding to directly support their thesis projects. These funds are not an award, and can only be supplied as either reimbursement or purchases made directly by the IDM director or Student Success Operations Manager.

- Proposals are accepted on a rolling basis, but must be submitted no later than 1 block prior to undertaking the senior thesis project. For example, if the thesis block begins in block 3, the deadline would be the last day of block 1.
- There is no standard format for a funding proposal, but proposals should include an itemized budget totaling no more than \$500 and should include a brief rationale for each item to be purchased.
- Thesis funding may support student work prior to the thesis block (GS400/401). In this case, the complete, final thesis proposal with co-advisor signatures must be submitted prior to the funding request.

Funding requests should be directed to Brett Gray (bgray@coloradocollege.edu)

Career Center Summer Internship Funding Awards

The Summer Internship Funding Awards Program is designed with the intention to increase the ability of Colorado College students to participate in internship opportunities, many of which remain unpaid or underpaid. Each Colorado College student is eligible to receive one award during their four undergraduate years.

All fully enrolled Colorado College students who will remain fully enrolled in courses for at least one semester beyond their internship, are eligible to apply for summer internship funding. If you are a junior, or first semester senior, who does not meet these eligibility requirements, we are happy to discuss extenuating circumstances and assess applications with some special considerations. Please reach out to the Career Center with questions, or complete an application with very clear information so your situation can be assessed.