

14 August 2006

Approved by EC 9/4/06

Approved by FS 9/11/06

## New Program Request Form for Bachelor's and Master's Degrees

Directions: An institution shall use this form to propose a new bachelor's or master's degree program. In completing the form, the institution should refer to the document *Standards for Bachelor's and Master's Programs*, which prescribes specific requirements for new degree programs. Note: This form requires signatures of (1) the Chief Executive Officer, certifying adequacy of funding for the new program; (2) a member of the Board of Regents (or designee), certifying Board approval, and (3) if applicable, a member of the Board of regents or (designee), certifying that criteria have been met for staff-level approval. Note: An institution which does not have preliminary authority for the proposed program share submit a separate request for preliminary authority. That request shall address criteria set in Coordinating Board rules Section 5.24 (a).

Information: Contact the Division of Academic Affairs and Research at 512/427-6200 for more information.

### Administrative Information

1. Institution: **Texas A&M University**

2. Program Name – Show how the program would appear on the Coordinating Board's program inventory (e.g., *Bachelor's of Business Administration degree with a major in Accounting*):

Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degree with major in University Studies

3. Proposed CIP Code: 30.9999.xx

The degree should be classified as having an interdisciplinary major, but we would prefer that it be distinguished from the existing interdisciplinary studies programs offered by the College of Education.

4. Brief Program Description – Describe the program and the educational objectives:

- The University Studies degree would be an innovative interdisciplinary degree with an area of concentration and two minors, at least one of which is in a different college from that of the area of concentration. The degree would serve two main groups of students: first, students who are in good academic standing (GPA of 2.0 or above) but who are unable to find or gain access to a major of interest and (b) students who specifically seek a broad interdisciplinary education or a specific interdisciplinary combination of coursework that is unavailable through existing degree programs.
- Educational objectives: to provide students with an interdisciplinary academic degree that will prepare them for a successful life and career or for graduate school. To help ensure that University Study degrees are coherent and meaningful programs, students

will submit a degree proposal explaining the rationale for the concentration and minors they propose which will have to be reviewed and approved by the department or college offering the area of concentration before the student is accepted into the University Studies program.

5. Administrative Unit – Identify where the program would fit within the organizational structure of the university (e.g., *The Department of Electrical Engineering within the College of Engineering*):

Advising and other support would be provided by Texas A&M's Department of General Academic Programs, which has been providing academic support for undergraduate students, but has not been, up until now an academic administrative unit, as recognized by the Coordinating Board. Other support, evaluation of student proposals, including some advising, support of students in the concentration, and review of degree proposals, would be provided by the department offering the student's area of concentration.

In the Coordinating Board's program inventory, the program could be listed as being administered by the Department of General Academic Programs or it could be shown as being administered by each academic College in the university—since each college will offer at least one area of concentration.

6. Proposed Implementation Date – Report the first semester and year that students would enter the program:

Fall 2007

7. Contact Person – Provide contact information for the person who can answer specific questions about the program:

Name: R. Douglas Slack

Title: Regents Professor of Wildlife & Fisheries Sciences

E-mail: [d-slack@tamu.edu](mailto:d-slack@tamu.edu)

Phone: 979 845 5707

## Program Information

### University Studies Degree

#### *Executive Summary*

The following document is the proposal/description of the University Studies degree put together by a working subcommittee of the Texas A&M University faculty senate. Because this document describes the rationale and intent of the degree so clearly, we are including it as the executive summary for this proposal.

#### *Draft Proposal for An Interdisciplinary Degree*

This proposal is in response to the report of the Undergraduate Program Task Force, chaired by Dean Jerry R. Strawser. The Strawser Task Force was asked to evaluate opportunities for undergraduate students in good academic standing who could not find an appropriate academic home. In many instances these students were not able to continue to upper division level courses because of grade-point barriers or were not able to transfer to another appropriate college because of grade point restraints.

The Strawser Report (March 2006), which is available on-line at the Faculty Senate Web Site, specifically identifies five student groups that would be served by this degree plan. In all cases the students are in good academic standing (grade-point average  $\geq 2.0$ ).

- a. General Studies students who are unable to find an academic major of interest.
- b. Students currently enrolled in a major field of study, but do not meet College or Department requirements to continue in that major because of academic requirements for upper division courses and are required to change majors or transfer to another field of study.
- c. Students who wish to change colleges or departments because of different interests, but are unable to enroll in a desired field of study because of capacity or inability to meet transfer standards that exceed those for maintaining good academic standing.
- d. Students who initially chose an inappropriate major and desire to transfer to a desired field of study, but are prohibited because of capacity or inability to meet transfer standards.
- e. High achieving students who are truly generalists and seek a broad, interdisciplinary education.

The proposal presented here recognizes the pressures faced by both students and academic units on the Texas A&M University campus. The problem, as identified in the Strawser Report (2006), was to provide "a reasonable course of study and a greater degree of options for students who are in good academic standing at Texas A&M University. [The problem] is not creating a course of study for students who would

otherwise not qualify for admission to Texas A&M University. Our target audience is students who qualified for admissions based on normal university standards but are not able to pursue their desired course of study." In addition, students who truly seek an interdisciplinary degree that broaches Department and College barriers may find barriers to innovative degree plans.

On the other hand academic units, Colleges and Departments, may face capacity constraints that mitigate against unfettered growth. Indeed, within Departments, academic standards for upper division courses may curtail enrollment in these courses despite a student being in good academic standing.

The following proposal for a University Studies Degree follows the long-term approaches outlined in a combination of Sections B.1 and B.2 of the Strawser Report (March 2006). The University Studies Degree presented herein outlines a course of study that is both interdisciplinary and accessible to all students who are in good academic standing (i.e., a GPR of at least a 2.0). In the end, we believe that the draft proposal for a University Studies Degree presented here will "(1) reduce the number of students involuntarily enrolled in General Studies, and (2) [will] provide expanded academic opportunities for students unable to obtain access to their desired major" (Strawser Report, 2006), and (3) will provide a logical home for students seeking an innovative interdisciplinary degree.

The following is a summary of the current approach of the ad hoc committee on the University Studies Degree. The degree will consist of:

- TAMU Core curriculum
- An area of concentration
- Two minors, at least one of which is in a different college from that of the area of concentration. This last requirement is to ensure that the degree is truly interdisciplinary.
- Free electives, so that the total number of hours is at least 120.

*Specifics:*

1. Areas of Concentration. These areas will be 21--24 hours, with a minimum of 12 hours in residence at the 300-400 level. Normally, at least two courses will be at the 400 level. If a proposal for an area of concentration has fewer than two such courses, a case must be made for an exception. Areas of concentration will be developed by departments (or, if interdisciplinary, by colleges). The route for an area of concentration to be approved is from the department, to the college, to the University Curriculum Committee, and then to the Faculty Senate. When an area of concentration is proposed, the proposal will specify whether the degree in University Studies will be a B.A. or a B.S. Colleges will develop guidelines as to whether a proposed area of concentration leads to a B.A or B.S.
2. Minors. The requirement for courses to constitute a minor in a University Studies degree will be the same as is currently required for a minor: 15-18 hours, with at least 6 hours in residence at the 300-400 level. All minors currently offered are acceptable in the University Studies Degree, however, later changes in currently existing minors

must be approved (see point 7, below). New minors will go through the same channels as above to be approved in the University Studies Degree.

3. Access to the degree. The aim is to have the vast majority of concentrations and minors accessible to students who are in good academic standing. Therefore, except under extenuating circumstances, all proposed areas of concentration will have as their entrance requirement that the student have at least a 2.0 overall GPR, at least a 2.0 in specified prerequisite material, and have an application accepted (see point 4). Examples of extenuating circumstances are: limited resources available, or (for a performing art) an audition required. However, every college must offer at least one area of concentration and at least one minor whose only entrance requirement is that a student must have at least a 2.0 in overall GPR and at least a 2.0 in specified prerequisite material.
4. Entrance into the University Studies program. Initially, participation in the program is to be limited to undergraduate students enrolled at Texas A&M at the time of application to the program. A student must submit an admission application specifying the area of concentration and the minors, explaining why these form a coherent degree. The application must be approved by the department offering the area of concentration (or by the college, if the concentration crosses departments in a college). So that there will be sufficient time for reviews of the proposals, the committee recommends that the student submit the proposal (between 500 and 1000 words in length) no later than the 30<sup>th</sup> class day of a long semester and no later than the 10<sup>th</sup> day of first summer session. A critical review of the proposal, holding it to rigorous, high standards, is central to the ultimate success of the program. Given these expectations of high standards, it is anticipated that a proposal not initially approved may undergo revision and be resubmitted. It is suggested that after the program has been in operation for a period of not less than two years, the issue of freshman and transfer student admission directly into the program be considered in light of the additional knowledge of the demands and loads imposed upon colleges/departments by the program.
5. Advising. Advising for a student in the University Studies program will be in the department (or college) of the area of concentration. The University will recognize departments (or colleges) serving students in an area of concentration in a manner similar to the way that the University currently recognizes departments serving their majors.
6. Diploma. The diploma will state that the degree is a B.A. or B.S. in University Studies, but will not give the area of concentration or minors. These will, however, be stated on the student's transcript. The student's diploma will be awarded at the graduation ceremony of the college which contains the area of concentration.
7. Minors and areas of concentration will be tied to the student's catalog of record, requiring that changes in minors and concentrations must be documented through the same process as the original approval.
8. Office of University Studies. An Office of University Studies will be created, as part of the General Academics Program, and will serve to coordinate the University Studies

program, keeping track of all students in the program.

9. The expectation is that the resources necessary for this program will be provided by the Provost. The subcommittee felt that it was not in its charge to determine how the program was will be funded.

Strawser, Jerry R., G. Kemble Bennett, John L. Fike, J. Martyn Gunn, Charles A. Johnson, Alison Morton, H. Joseph Newton, Jonathan Smith, and Mark H. Weichold. 1 March 2006. Report of the Undergraduate Program Task Force. Texas A&M University.

### **Members of the Faculty Senate Committee – University Studies Degree**

- Dr. Kriss Boyd, Associate Dean, General Academic Program  
Dr. Greg Cobb, Associate Professor, Horticultural Sciences  
Dr. Richard Curry, Associate Professor, Hispanic Studies  
Dr. John Fike, Former Speaker, Faculty Senate; Associate Professor, Engineering Technology and Industrial Distribution; Co-chair University Studies Degree Committee  
Dr. Jo Howze, Associate Dean of Engineering  
Dr. Martyn Gunn, Former Speaker, Faculty Senate; Professor, Biochemistry and Biophysics  
Dr. Jimmie Killingsworth, Professor, English  
Dr. Robert Knight, Associate Professor, Rangeland Ecology and Management; Chair, University Curriculum Committee  
Dr. Martha Louder, Former Speaker, Faculty Senate; Associate Dean of Mays Business School  
Dr. Paul Meyer, Assistant Provost  
Dr. Lynn Ruoff, Clinical Associate Professor, Veterinary Integrative Biosciences  
Dr. Douglas Slack, Speaker, Faculty Senate; Regents Professor, Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences  
Dr. Tom Vogel, Associate Professor, Mathematics; Co-chair University Studies Degree Committee  
Dr. Mark Weichold, Former Speaker, Faculty Senate; Associate Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Programs

**I. Need**

*Note: Complete I.A and I.B only if preliminary authority for the program was granted more than four years ago. This includes programs for which the institution was granted broad preliminary authority for the discipline.*

A. Job Market Need – Provide short- and long-term evidence of the need for graduates in the job market.

National data consistently show that college graduates are better prepared for the workforce than non-college graduates. Part of the goal of this program is to provide a pathway to graduation for students in good academic standing who are unable to declare an academic major of interest. Beyond the benefit that a bachelor's degree will afford students, the specific relation between a student's interdisciplinary program of study and the job market will depend on the actual degrees developed by students. As described elsewhere, we consider advising, and the review process for considering and approving student degree programs to be key to ensuring that students complete degrees that prepare them for the job market and their future careers. Among the faculty participating in the development of this degree, there is some optimism that many of the students completing this interdisciplinary program will complete programs specifically tailored to their career aspirations.

B. Student Demand – Provide short- and long-term evidence of demand for the program.

Several Texas A&M studies in recent years have looked at the problem of access to majors (See attached *Report of the Undergraduate Program Task Force*, also know as the Strawser Report). It is estimated that approximately 1,000 undergraduate students at Texas A&M University have taken 60 hours and are in good academic standing (GPA of 2.0 or above), without having been admitted to a major in which they can graduate. Some of these students find other majors they can graduate in, but many should be attracted to this degree.

C. Enrollment Projections – Use this table to show the estimated cumulative headcount and full-time student equivalent (FTSE) enrollment for the first five years of the program. (Include majors only and consider attrition and graduation.)

YEAR	1	2	3	4	5
Headcount	200	400	550	700	800
FTSE					

**II. Quality**

A. Degree Requirements – Use this table to show the degree requirements of the program. (*Modify the table as needed; if necessary, replicate the table for more than one option.*)

The degree will consist of:

- TAMU Core curriculum
- An area of concentration
- Two minors, at least one of which is in a different college from that of the area of concentration. This last requirement is to ensure that the degree is truly interdisciplinary.
- Free electives, so that the total number of hours is at least 120.

*Specifics:*

Areas of Concentration. These areas will be 21--24 hours, with a minimum of 12 hours in residence at the 300-400 level. Normally, at least two courses will be at the 400 level. If a proposal for an area of concentration has fewer than two such courses, a case must be made for an exception. Areas of concentration will be developed by departments (or, if interdisciplinary, by colleges). The route for an area of concentration to be approved is from the department, to the college, to the University Curriculum Committee, and then to the Faculty Senate. When an area of concentration is proposed, the proposal will specify whether the degree in University Studies will be a B.A. or a B.S. Colleges will develop guidelines as to whether a proposed area of concentration leads to a B.A or B.S.

Minors. The requirement for courses to constitute a minor in a University Studies degree will be the same as is currently required for a minor: 15-18 hours, with at least 6 hours in residence at the 300-400 level. All minors currently offered are acceptable in the University Studies Degree, however, later changes in currently existing minors must be approved. (See Appendix 1 for a list of existing undergraduate minors.) New minors will go through the same channels as above to be approved in the University Studies Degree.

B.

TOTAL	Category	120 Semester Credit Hours	
	General Education Core Curriculum <i>(bachelor's degree only)</i>	43	
	Concentration	21-24 hours	
	Minor 1	15-18 hours	
	Minor 2	15-18 hours	
	Free Electives	17-26	
	Other ( <i>Specify, e.g., internships, clinical work</i> )	(if not included above)	

Curriculum – Use these tables to identify the required courses and prescribed electives of the program. Note with an asterisk (\*) courses that would be added if the program is approved. *(Add and delete rows as needed. If applicable, replicate the tables for different tracks/options.)*

Not applicable. Courses would be existing courses. All concentrations and minors will be listed in the university undergraduate catalog. Concentrations will go through the same university approval process that minors go through now.

- C. Faculty – Use these tables to provide information about Core and Support faculty. Add an asterisk (\*) before the name of the individual who will have direct administrative responsibilities for the program. *(Add and delete rows as needed.)*

Not Applicable. Existing Texas A&M University faculty will teach in the program. The main area where we estimate new resources will be needed is in the area of advising. Those resources will be made available.

- D. Library – Provide the library director's assessment of library resources necessary for the program. Describe plans to build the library holdings to support the program.

Not applicable.

- E. Facilities and Equipment – Describe the availability and adequacy of facilities and equipment to support the program. Describe plans for facility and equipment improvements/additions.

Not applicable.

- F. Accreditation – If the discipline has a national accrediting body, describe plans to obtain accreditation or provide a rationale for not pursuing accreditation.

Not applicable.

### III. **Costs and Funding**

This program would be offered across the university making use of existing faculty and courses and generally using the existing support structures that are in place for majors and minors. The main new cost that would be needed would be for additional advisors. We estimate that roughly 15 new advisors would be needed. At a cost of \$35,000 per advisor, this creates an annual cost of \$525,000 and an estimated five-year cost of \$2.625 million. The president and provost have indicated that will provide needed resources to support the degree.

We don't anticipate that that this program will generate any new formula funding, because the students in the program are already at Texas A&M University. At least initially, as the program is developed, transfer students will not have direct access to this program.

Five-Year Costs and Funding Sources - Use this table to show five-year costs and sources of funding for the program.

<b>Five-Year Costs</b>		<b>Five-Year Funding</b>	
Personnel <sup>1</sup>	\$2,625,000	Reallocated Funds	2,625,000 \$0
Facilities and Equipment	\$0	Anticipated New Formula Funding <sup>3</sup>	\$0
Library, Supplies, and Materials	\$0	Special Item Funding	\$0
Other <sup>2</sup>	\$0	Other <sup>4</sup>	\$0
<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>\$2,625,000</b>	<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>\$2,625,000</b>

1. Report costs for new faculty hires, graduate assistants, and technical support personnel. For new faculty, prorate individual salaries as a percentage of the time assigned to the program. If existing faculty will contribute to program, include costs necessary to maintain existing programs (e.g., cost of adjunct to cover courses previously taught by faculty who would teach in new program).
2. Specify other costs here (e.g., administrative costs, travel).
3. Indicate formula funding for students new to the institution because of the program; formula funding should be included only for years three through five of the program and should reflect enrollment projections for years three through five.
4. Report other sources of funding here. In-hand grants, "likely" future grants, and designated tuition and fees can be included.

## Appendix 1. Existing undergraduate minors

### **Agriculture and Life Sciences**

- Agricultural Communications and Journalism
- Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness
- Agronomy
- Biochemistry
- Bioenvironmental Sciences
- Entomology
- Environmental Soil Science
- Forestry
- Genetics
- Horticulture
- Park and Natural Resources
- Poultry Science
- Rangeland Ecology and Management
- Tourism Resource Management
- Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences

### **Architecture**

- Art and Architectural History
- Global Art, Design and Construction
- Urban and Regional Planning

### **Business**

- Business

### **Education**

- Coaching
- Creative Studies
- Dance
- Outdoor Education

### **Engineering**

- Aerospace Engineering
- Computer Science
- Electrical Engineering
- Nuclear Engineering
- Petroleum Engineering
- Radiological Health Engineering

### **Geosciences**

- Earth Sciences
- Geography
- Geoinformatics
- Geology
- Geophysics
- Meteorology
- Oceanography

**Liberal Arts**

- Africana Studies
- Anthropology
- Classical Studies
- Communication
- Comparative Cultural Studies – International
- Comparative Cultural Studies – United States
- Comparative Literature
- Economics
- English
- Film Studies
- French
- German
- Hispanic Studies
- History
- Journalism
- Linguistics
- Music
- Philosophy
- Professional Writing
- Psychology
- Religious Studies
- Russian
- Sociology
- Spanish
- Theatre Arts
- Women's Studies

**Science**

- Biology
- Chemistry
- Mathematics
- Neuroscience
- Physics
- Statistics

## Signature Page

1. Adequacy of Funding – The chief executive officer shall sign the following statement:

*I certify that the institution has adequate funds to cover the costs of the new program. Furthermore, the new program will not reduce the effectiveness or quality of existing programs at the institution.*

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Chief Executive Officer

Date

2. Board of Regents Approval – A member of the Board of Regents or designee shall sign the following statement:

*On behalf of the Board of Regents, I certify that the Board of Regents has approved the program.*

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Board of Regents (Designee)

Date of Approval

3. Board of Regents Certification of Criteria for Commissioner of Assistant Commissioner Approval – For a program to be approved by the Commissioner or the Assistant Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Research, the Board of Regents or designee must certify that the new program meets the eight criteria under TAC Section 5.50 (b): The criteria stipulate that the program shall:

- (1) be within the institution's current Table of Programs;
- (2) have a curriculum, faculty, resources, support services, and other components of a degree program that are comparable to those of high quality programs in the same or similar disciplines at other institutions;
- (3) have sufficient clinical or in-service sites, if applicable, to support the program;
- (4) be consistent with the standards of the Commission of Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and, if applicable, with the standards or discipline-specific accrediting agencies and licensing agencies;
- (5) attract students on a long-term basis and produce graduates who would have opportunities for employment; or the program is appropriate for the development of a well-rounded array of basic baccalaureate degree programs at the institution;
- (6) not unnecessarily duplicate existing programs at other institutions;
- (7) not be dependent on future Special Item funding
- (8) have new five-year costs that would not exceed \$2 million.

*On behalf of the Board of Regents, I certify that the new program meets the criteria specified under TAC Section 5.50 (b).*

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Board of Regents (Designee)

Date

