

**UMBC UGC Program Changes & Other Request:** enter program name

Date Submitted:

Proposed Effective Date: Spring 2017

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**Specifics (see instructions):**

We request the following two changes to the INDS major, which each involve changing a course already on offer by the program into a course that is required for the major:

1. We request that INDS335 (“Interdisciplinary Degree Plan Writing Seminar,” 1CR\*) change from an optional course to become a required course for the INDS major
2. We request that INDS399 (“Guided Reading,” 1CR) change from an optional course to become a required course for the INDS major
3. We request a change to the minimum number of credits required for an INDS degree from 42 credits to 45 credits.

*\* An accompanying request to the UGC asks that this course, INDS335 be raised from 1CR to 2CR*

**Rationale (see instructions):**

**(A) What are the major departures from the current structure and why is the new structure preferable?**

This request adds two courses to the core curriculum of the INDS major, and asks for an associated increase in the minimum number of credits required for the INDS degree. Each of the courses involved has been created within the past three years to improve students’ preparation/execution of an individualized degree with the Interdisciplinary Studies Program. Each course addresses one or more criticisms of INDS identified by the special assistant to the provost for interdisciplinary activities. Internal assessment over this initial period of course delivery provides evidence that each course is working as intended, so that students who do not take the courses struggle relative to those who do in terms of timely and successful graduation from the program. We therefore seek to make each course a mandatory component of the INDS degree. Over the past two year, the staff of INDS have been recommending students to take both courses with increasing vigor. At this point we believe it is preferable to ask that both courses be made mandatory.

INDS335 guides students to identify clearly the constituent coursework and co-curricular activities of a unique degree. This includes providing evidence of the future for which this degree prepares them as a viable and competitive candidate (e.g. graduate program or job), and preparing a timeline for degree completion. As a side-effect, it also enables program staff to identify clearly and early where an alternative route through their undergraduate career (such as another degree program offered by UMBC) is the better option for any given student. Members of the Interdisciplinary Studies Committee (which reviews and votes to approve or reject students’ degree proposals) have noted a steady increase in the quality of proposals they are reviewing attributable to this course.

INDS399 guides students through building solid, scholarly foundations for the research work that they intend to carry out for a senior capstone project. This involves both assembling academic resources and building the network of professional relationships (among peers, professional staff and faculty) that will support them through their research. A side effect of the course is to provide “early warning” to INDS staff of problems that could otherwise delay or impede timely and successful graduation from UMBC – such as dysfunctional relationships with stakeholders in the project, mismatched or unrealistic expectations or significant weaknesses in one or more aspects of research scholarship. As a result, INDS staff and instructors have noted that students completing INDS399 enter INDS480 (“Interdisciplinary Studies: Capstone Project Seminar”) better prepared for success.

A further request to increase the minimum number of credits in the INDS degree follows naturally from the addition of these courses. By increasing the core curriculum to 14 credits, students who take advantage of other, non-required INDS courses (such as the INDS410 internship and the INDS400 independent study up to a maximum of 4 credits each) are capable of taking a total of 22\* INDS credits. By raising the minimum total credits of an INDS degree to 45, we ensure that the majority of undergraduate credits are earned in other programs and courses recognized by the university.

**(B) What provisions will be made to accommodate current students if courses are discontinued?**

Should circumstances beyond our control require either course be discontinued then we would use our existing course INDS400 (Independent Study) as a way to accommodate student needs by approximating core content of these two courses while we adapt to whatever circumstances have necessitated the change. As described above, each course contributes directly to student success

**(C) If there is a change in required credits, please provide a specific justification for that change.**

This request adds two<sup>§</sup> credits of academic study to the INDS program (from 11 to 13<sup>§</sup> credits) in order to improve student success. Both courses speak directly to Senate Bill 740, allowing both INDS staff and students to monitor degree progress more carefully, and to identify early and clearly where an alternate path through UMBC is preferable. While this change is modest and easily incorporated into most students' degree plans, INDS is working to minimize any impediments to students' degree progress by preparing to offer both within summer and/or winter sessions. As one-credit courses, they are particularly suitable for delivery within shorter periods outside of regular v semesters, and we are piloting online components to each course with a view to creating official "hybrid" versions. In a similar manner, our request to increase the minimum number of credits required for an INDS degree from 42 to 45 is anticipated to have minimal negative impact on any student's pathway to timely graduation. For example, none of our current ~120 declared majors are working towards INDS degrees that comprise less than 45 credits.

*§ An accompanying request to the UGC asks that this course be raised from 1CR to 2CR – if accepted, this change would mean that this program change would add 3 credits to the INDS program (from 11 to 14 credits)*