

## Guidelines for Preparing Individual Area Major Proposals

### I. Determine Feasibility

- The process of developing an area major should begin well in advance (months) of anticipated review; the Committee on the Undergraduate Curriculum meets about once a month. The review process may continue for more than one meeting, if revisions are required.
- Contact the Office of Academic Advising to obtain advice about the process.
- Contact the Chair of the Committee on the Undergraduate Curriculum about your desire to pursue development of an area major plan in more detail and to consult about your intended time frame for submitting a proposal to the CUC.
- Contact a faculty advisor in each department represented in your tentative area major plan to 1) discuss your interest, 2) determine their potential support of the concept, 3) solicit their concerns regarding feasibility.
- Early on, identify one or more faculty advisor advocate(s) willing to commit the time necessary to help you develop a “comprehensive and substantial course of study” that incorporates academic disciplines in which Rice has an appropriate quality and quantity of courses.
- Both breadth (courses that provides a broad view of different aspects of the relevant disciplines) and depth (300-400 level classes with a particular focus) are important in an area major plan, as with any major. How will you incorporate these? Will it potentially require more courses than a regular major? **Will the needed courses be offered during the time available to graduation?**
- Research similar programs/majors at peer universities. Are the curricular resources available at Rice to build a comparable major?
- Can the desired curricular program be achieved by combining an existing major and/or minor with electives? If so, the major is unlikely to be approved.
- Will enough of the courses you seek to include be offered in the time remaining to graduation to enable you to complete the major? **Once you have sketched out your course plans for the major, confirm this with your departmental advisors or relevant department chairs, especially with regard to required courses. You are responsible for confirming that the courses in your plan will be offered while you are completing the major.**

## II. Write a Proposal

The proposal must include:

1. an Introduction that provides a concise rationale and set of objectives for the area major, indicating why you consider the major necessary to your goals for your undergraduate experience. *This should not exceed two pages;*
2. a detailed outline of the academic program, including faculty advisors, core courses and electives, learning outcomes, a full list of courses that potentially will fill the requirements for the major, and, if applicable, details of any planned senior thesis or culminating experience **and the advisor who will oversee it;**
  - **You must identify those courses that will definitely be taught in the next two semesters; and those that are likely to be taught before your scheduled graduation semester. Your Dept. advisors will need to help you obtain this information**
  - **For any courses that have prerequisites, you must list those prerequisites and indicate whether you have already fulfilled them. Specifically:**
    - *All prerequisites for Core Courses must themselves be listed as Core Courses. For example, if PHYS 126 is a Core Course, PHYS 125 must also be listed as a core course.*
    - *For each Elective Course option, list all prerequisites that are not required Core Courses. In general, you should avoid listing Elective Courses with extensive prerequisites that are not required Core Courses.*
  - **Indicate which of the requirements for the major you have already or are currently taking, e.g., by using a special font for them**
  - **You must consult substantively with your faculty advisors while developing a proposal draft. Proposals that do not reflect thoughtful faculty input on rationale, requirements and learning outcomes have a limited chance of approval.**
3. **a sample program for your remaining academic semesters until graduation that illustrates how you will fulfill the requirements for the major and any additional requirements (e.g., pre-med) that you need to complete**
4. Examples of academic programs for similar majors at peer universities. Place these in an appendix.
5. **A copy of your 4-year plan from Academic Advising**

You will find examples of previous, successful Individual Area Major proposals on the Committee for the Undergraduate Curriculum Website. New requirements for the proposal have been added since they were written, however. The current guidelines include these.

### **III. Submit the Proposal**

- Contact the Chair of the Committee on the Undergraduate Curriculum at least a month ahead of your anticipated submission date
- Obtain signatures of all faculty advisors, at least one of whom must be a Rice tenure-track faculty member, and a signature from the Office of Academic Advising on the proposal cover sheet downloaded from the Website of the Committee on the Undergraduate Curriculum
- Submit the proposal in hard copy, with the cover sheet, to the Dean of Undergraduates
- Submit a digital file of the proposal, with cover sheet, by email to the chair of the Committee on the Undergraduate Curriculum.

### **IV. Changes to an approved Area Major.**

The CUC must approve any changes to an Area Major, including changes to core courses, the list of electives, or the content or scope of a capstone or thesis. Normally, requests for changes will be approved if they are prompted by circumstances beyond the student's control (e.g., scheduling conflicts for core courses, courses not offered as anticipated) or by the opportunity of new course offerings that fall within the scope and objectives of the original proposal. Students must seek approval for course changes or substitutions before taking the course(s) in question.

Requests for changes must include:

- A letter explaining the reason for the changes
- Letters from each of the faculty advisors who signed the original cover sheet, indicating: 1. whether the requested changes fall within the scope and objectives of the original proposal and 2. their support for the changes

Submit these documents to the Chair of the Committee on the Undergraduate Curriculum, with a copy to Academic Advising. Requests must be received no later than the start of the final semester of senior year.