



## Newsletter of the Self-Designed Major Program

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# Looking For The Perfect Major?

## Maybe We Can Help

The Self-Designed Major Program offers the opportunity for self-directed students to arrange courses offered by the University of Southern Maine in a unique way suited to their own interests.

### *What is a Self-Designed Major?*

The Self-Designed Major Program at the University of Southern Maine was created to give self-directed students an opportunity to blend the study of traditional and new inventive subjects in a multi-disciplinary format suited to their individual interests and goals. There are two types of self-designed majors, a) individual contract and b) group contract programs. Students may receive a bachelor of arts degree through either type of program.

An **individual contract** self-designed major is one in which the student carefully selects each course to fit with their specific goals and interests within certain guidelines. Proposals for self-designed majors are presented to a committee of faculty for review and approval during the fall and spring semesters. Normally, students should begin this process before accruing 60 credits or more. Interested students should contact the College of Arts and Sciences for more information and complete guidelines about this exciting option.

A **group contract** self-designed major is one where a curriculum has been previously established using courses from two or more departments. Students interested in one of the eleven group contract self-designed majors should contact the faculty coordinator listed below.

### GROUP CONTRACT COORDINATORS

#### **Classical Humanities –**

Peter Aicher, 55 Exeter Street, (P) 780-4312

#### **Classical Studies-**

Peter Aicher, 55 Exeter Street, (P) 780-4312

#### **Foreign Languages-**

Mara Ubans, 55 Exeter Street, (P) 780-4290

#### **French Studies-**

Lucia diBenedetto, 55 Exeter Street, (P) 780-4290

#### **General Science-**

Richard Stebbins, 227 Science Bldg, (P) 780-4449

#### **German Studies-**

Mara Ubans, 55 Exeter Street, (P) 780-4290

#### **Hispanic Studies-**

Charlene Suscavage, 55 Exeter Street, (P) 780-4290

#### **Russian Studies-**

Charlotte Rosenthal, 55 Exeter Street, (P) 780-4290

#### **International Studies-**

Lynn Kuzma, 126 Bedford Street, (P) 780-4283

#### **Social Sciences-**

Dana McDaniel, 65 Exeter Street, (P) 780-4592

### WHO CAN SELF-DESIGN A MAJOR AT USM?

YOU may be eligible to self-design your own major if you meet the following guidelines and follow the steps listed below.

### BASIC CRITERIA REQUIRED

(for Individual Contract Proposals only)

- Satisfy minimum proficiencies in writing and in math.
- Complete a minimum of 15 credits of College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) courses at USM within a total of 30 credits of CAS courses (may include transfer credit).
- Your grade point average (GPA) must be at 2.50 or above in order to be eligible to propose your Self-Designed Major (SDM).
- The appropriate time to submit an SDM proposal is when you have completed between 45 and 60 credits.

### WHAT DO I DO FIRST?

- **Access the Self-Designed Major (SDM) website at <http://usm.maine.edu/cas/sdm/sdmajor.html> to read the most recent SDM Newsletter and SDM Proposal Guidelines**
- **Read the SDM News and SDM Proposal Guidelines thoroughly.**
- Research programs comparable to the one you want to propose here at USM. Helpful resources are the Peterson's Guide to Colleges and Universities, the Internet, Library Microfiche (for catalog information on major requirements at other universities/colleges).**
- Photocopy all pertinent information (course descriptions and major requirements) on at least two programs at other insitutions that have programs currently in use that are similar to the SDM you hope to propose at USM.
- Find out if USM offers the courses needed to support your proposal. Check the USM catalog.
- Schedule an appointment with the Pam Edwards, Director, Student Academic Affairs and CAS Advising, to go over your ideas, ask questions.
- Be prepared for your meeting. Bring with you any research you have found on comparable programs and a list of pertinent questions you have about the process.

### KEEP IN MIND

- DO NOT take more than 30% of the courses you will want to include in the SDM before you submit your proposal.
- The SDM must include a minimum of 30 credits of upper-level course work.
- At least 50% of the SDM courses must be from the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS).
- You will need to locate two faculty members willing to advise you on an ongoing basis. If you need ideas contact the Coordinator.

### \*\*\*SPECIAL NOTE TO TRANSFER STUDENTS

- Students with 60 or more transfer credits are urged to meet with the coordinator during their first semester.

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

**Chair** - Patricia O'Mahoney-Damon,  
- *Natural Science* - Biology  
Assunta Kent  
- *Fine Arts* – Theatre  
Brian Hapcic  
- *Fine Arts* – Theatre  
Caryn Prudente  
- *Natural Science* – Chemistry  
Charlotte Rosenthal  
- *Humanities* – Russian Studies  
Bruce Thompson  
- *Social Science* – Psychology  
Adam Tuchinsky  
- *Humanities* – History  
Francesca Vasallo  
- *Social Science* – Political Science  
Pamela Edwards, Director, Student Academic Affairs and  
CAS Advising  
- *College of Arts & Sciences* – Dean's Office

## DROP-IN AND SHOW OFF

Graduating seniors in the self-designed major program are required to make a presentation at the semi-annual Drop-In and Show Off. The audience helping to celebrate the student's success is generally comprised of faculty members of the Self-Designed Major Committee, other self-designed majors, the student's family, and interested members of the university community. Presentations are generally 15 - 20 minutes in length, focus on the student's senior thesis project, and may also include how that project grew out of their self-designed major.

The Drop-In is a great opportunity for anyone who is interested to find out more about the Self-Designed Major Program, talk with other students in the program, and to meet the SDM faculty committee. It's also a great place for current SDMs to get ideas for their own senior presentations.

We hope you will set aside time to join us at the next Drop-In and Show Off.

## **Students Share Experience With Self-Designed Major Program**

(Individual Contract)

*"I wanted to take a brief moment to thank you all so very much for this wonderful program. Not only have I gained valuable skills from this program, I will leave this institution knowing that my degree met all of my interests and expectations. Thank you for your encouragement and support and for allowing me to build my dream here at USM."* --Lisa Lawry, SDM graduate (1997) Comparative Religious Studies

*"I enjoyed the process of constructing my self-designed major. Working with the committee helped me ask myself what I wanted to do with my time at USM. Looking back, I am very happy with the results. I started looking into a self-designed major when the major I had wanted since high school turned out to be completely wrong for me. Now I consider my time at USM a double success; firstly that I have gotten an education suited to my interests, and secondly, that having to design the major helped me learn about myself."* -- James Rohman, SDM graduate (1995) Computer Applications to Video Production

## DEADLINES, DEADLINES, DEADLINES!

Completed proposals, and proposal changes must be submitted to the SDM Coordinator at least two weeks prior to the scheduled meeting date in order to be put on that month's agenda. Once available slots have been filled, students will be scheduled for the next available meeting date.

## NOTICES

### ***Graduating Seniors:***

If you are planning to graduate in May, August, or December you need to contact the SDM Coordinator **NOW** to set up a time to propose your SDM senior thesis/project to the SDMC, and receive their approval before you begin work on the project.

**You should propose your senior thesis/project no later than two semesters prior to your projected graduation date.**

Remember, your degree cannot be awarded until your senior thesis/project presentation has been made. Presentations are scheduled to be made at the Drop-In and Show Off during finals week in December and May only.

### Schedule of Meetings

The SDMC meets three times per semester on a monthly basis during the fall and spring semesters. Fully completed proposals must be received by the coordinator a minimum of two weeks prior to a meeting.

**Call 780-4221 for more information and to let us know you're interested in making a proposal!**

**See our Website for  
specific proposal details at:**  
<http://usm.maine.edu/cas/sdm/sdmajor.html>

