

**Peru State College**  
**Proposal to Add a New Major in Interdisciplinary Studies**

1. Descriptive information

- A. Name of institution: Peru State College (PSC)
- B. Name of program: Interdisciplinary Studies
- C. Degrees/credentials to be awarded graduates of the program: Bachelor of Science or Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies
- D. Other minors offered in this field by the institution: None
- E. CIP code: 30.9999
- F. Administrative units for the program: Academic Affairs
- G. Proposed delivery site(s) and type(s) of delivery, if applicable: On Campus and Online
- H. Proposed date (term/year) the program will be initiated: Fall 2020
- I. Description, including credit hours and other requirements (program of study) and purpose of the proposed program: The Interdisciplinary Studies major allows students to propose their own programs of study in order to meet their career, professional or personal goals. Interested students would meet with an advisor to help plan the program. The program must be approved by the College and include coursework from at least two disciplinary areas. In addition to the requirements listed here, students will also have to meet all other graduation requirements for the College, including General Studies. The program includes a culminating experience such as a capstone course, capstone project, thesis or internship. The courses identified must form an integrated plan and include 48-57 credits of coursework, of which:
  - At least 30 credits must come from a primary discipline;
  - At least 12 credits must come from one additional discipline; and
  - 30 credits must be upper level (courses numbered 300 or above).

2. Centrality to Role and Mission

The Interdisciplinary Studies major supports the College's mission of providing an accessible and personalized transformational educational experience. Students with well-defined educational goals that are not met by any of the majors listed in the catalog may submit a proposal to create an Interdisciplinary Major. The major should be distinct from existing majors and use a set of courses to create an intentional, integrated and outcome-based program of study. This program will rely on existing courses, but will offer a distinct set of student learning outcomes from existing programs.

The Academics and Curriculum Committee, consisting of 7 faculty representing each of the three Schools, recommended approval of the program on March 12, 2019. Faculty Senate, which includes 7 faculty representing each of the three Schools recommended approval for first reading of the major on March 21, 2019 and recommended approval for second reading on April 18, 2019. Students are represented by non-voting members on these committees. President Dan Hanson approved the proposal on May 20, 2019.

### 3. Evidence of Need and Demand

#### A. Need for the program

The learning experiences in an interdisciplinary studies major will develop critical skills that are desired for a wide variety of careers. Krueger (2017) explained, "Interdisciplinary learning, according to researchers, not only prevents the dissociation of knowledge, but it creates 'higher-order thinkers' who can bring a holistic and analytical approach to complex problems. It also brings a host of beneficial side effects, including helping students examine their biases, advancing critical thinking and cognitive development, helping students embrace ambiguity, and fostering an appreciation for ethical concerns."

These are just the skills sought after by employers. According to the National Association for Colleges and Employers, "Employers responding to NACE's Job Outlook surveys have consistently indicated that critical thinking/problem solving, teamwork/collaboration, professionalism/work ethic, and oral/written communications are all essential competencies" (NACE, 2019). Recent face-to-face meetings with southeast Nebraska employers in business, banking, manufacturing, and criminal justice confirm that these are the skills that are most in demand. An Interdisciplinary Studies major would develop these competencies due to how the program is designed and the requirement of coursework from multiple disciplines. As a result, students will gain experiences that are comparable to the world of work where employees work in cross-functional teams to achieve their goals.

Additionally, an interdisciplinary studies program will help develop creativity, which is another important workplace skill. Robinson (2001) wrote, "Creativity depends on interactions between feeling and thinking, and across different disciplinary boundaries and fields of ideas." The proposed program will help students learn to apply theories and methodologies from different disciplines to solve problems.

Since the program provides for many different combinations of courses, it will also help to address emerging needs in the workforce. Students will be able to create programs of study to match the requirements of jobs that are newly emerging. Students will work with advisors and Deans to design their programs in a way that prepares them to achieve their goals and personal passions.

## B. Demand for the program

Interdisciplinary and self-designed majors are becoming increasingly popular. Hackman (2015) noted, "Between the 2002-2003 and 2012-2013 academic years, this unique major experienced a 74 increase in popularity among U.S. students." With a limited number of majors, Peru State College regularly turns away students for whom it does not offer a desired degree program. The availability of an Interdisciplinary Studies major would provide the opportunity to create a number of combinations of disciplines into a coherent whole that would be attractive to students.

According to IPEDS data, there were 229 completers in Multidisciplinary Programs (CIP Code 30) in Nebraska in 2017, 213 in 2016, 174 in 2015 and 198 in 2014. These numbers suggest that a multidisciplinary major is attractive to students and gaining in popularity in the state. Peru's System counterparts averaged 41 completers at Chadron during that period and 4.75 at Wayne. These numbers suggest a program at Peru could be popular with students.

There would also be students who are undeclared and who would choose the major in order to stay enrolled at the College and avoid transfer. For Fall 2018, there were approximately 30 undeclared students who enrolled as first-year students. This was 14 percent of the entering class. Based on discussions with specific students, there have been several in recent years that would have pursued this major if it were available to them.

## 4. Adequacy of Resources

### A. Faculty and Staff Resources:

The major will utilize existing courses taught by current faculty. There may be a limited number of independent study courses taught for the capstone project, but the costs would be minimal and managed with existing budgets.

### B. Physical Facilities:

This major will utilize existing facilities with no need for additional facilities.

### C. Instructional Equipment and Informational Resources:

This major will utilize current technology equipment, library holdings, data services, and telecommunication connectivity with no need for additional technology equipment, library holdings, data services, or telecommunication connectivity.

### D. Budget Projections for first five years of program:

The attached tables provide information related to the revenue and expenses for the program. Since the Interdisciplinary Studies major is primarily built upon existing programs and courses already being offered by Peru State College, the expenses to add this program are minimal.

Estimated expense projections initially have no expenses identified for instruction, for students will be building their programs using existing course offerings that have available seats to accommodate them. Year 3 begins the addition of three independent study courses taught per year to students in their final year of the program, to address the individualized capstone course that each student will be required to complete. Finally, initial expenses for advertising the program during its first two years have been included. Total expenses over the five-year period is projected at \$8,186.

Estimated revenue projections assume 5 “net new” students per year who would not have come to the College without the program, although the actual revenue may be higher than estimated should existing students also be retained who would have left PSC without the program. Enrollments in this program assume a small attrition rate each year and a total of 3 graduates per year for the program by Year 4. Total revenue over the five-year period is projected at \$388,864. Total contribution margin for this new program is \$380,678.

#### 5. Avoidance of Unnecessary Duplication

- A. Nearly every other institution offers Interdisciplinary Studies or similar programs, including the other two state Colleges. It is a common major that serves students who select that institution. The proposed program is similar to ones at other institutions.

The major at Peru State will help to serve students who are place-bound and cannot attend college elsewhere. The major will help to retain students who may face a disruption in their education or lose credits upon transfer to another institution to complete programs the College does not offer. The major will help provide an academic pathway for students who select the unique fit and location of Peru State College and its mission of access and affordability.

- B. Likewise, there are similar programs offered within the states that are members of the Midwestern Higher Education Compact.

#### 6. Consistency with the Comprehensive Statewide Plan for Postsecondary Education

The proposal to add an Interdisciplinary Studies major at Peru State College is consistent with the Comprehensive Statewide Plan for Postsecondary Education and helps the state advance three major goals: meeting the educational needs of students, meeting the needs of the state, and meeting the needs through exemplary institutions.

This program meets the educational needs of students. This major has been designed to provide an educational option for students who are not able to meet their academic goals through an established program. Peru State College's open admission policy provides access to students who would not be able to attend college otherwise, but are then limited by the majors available at the College. As a result, it's important for the institution to be flexible to help those students achieve their educational goals.

This major would open new possibilities for students who are served well by the College's unique mission. In particular, the College serves a high number of low-income and first generation students who appreciate their fit at the College and who would not be as likely to attend other institutions.

Importantly, the program can strengthen retention and degree completion for undeclared students. Buford and Nester (2019) noted that a best practice for undeclared students is to allow them to “combine multiple academic programs if the school permits it.”

Since the program is student-initiated and provides flexible curricular pathways, it is student-centered, creates inclusive environments that foster student success, and offers lifelong learning opportunities that are responsive to students' and workforce needs (Comprehensive Statewide Plan, 2016). Since the students design their own plans, they will have a greater sense of ownership for achieving the outcomes and graduating. For those students who enter the College with substantial dual enrollment credits, they would be able to create a flexible plan allowing for a transformative study abroad experience or semester-long internship.

The program also helps to meet the needs of the state by creating a knowledgeable, trained and skilled workforce. Students in the program will learn to work across disciplinary lines, which is an important career skill. In some fields, job announcements are calling for students to have both a depth and breadth of knowledge to be eligible for the position. By drawing on multiple disciplines, students who complete the Interdisciplinary Studies major will have breadth and depth.

The Comprehensive Statewide Plan (2016) also calls for addressing evolving needs and priorities of the students and people of Nebraska in a timely manner and adopting new methods and technologies to address them. Buford and Hester (2019) explain that programs that support formerly undeclared students may help to advance goals of innovation. They stated, “As organizations strive to attract new talent, it may be formerly undecided students who bring innovative solutions when the traditional model no longer serves. Their strengths in relationship-building and problem-solving lend themselves to charting new territory and leveraging human resources to tackle intractable issues.”

Finally, the Interdisciplinary Studies proposal will help Peru State College fulfill its role in an exemplary manner. The inclusion of the major—which is common at many of the College's peer institutions—will help the College compare favorably with those peers. Given that the major can be created with no additional new resources, it is an efficient way to provide additional access to student served by the College's mission and boost retention of undeclared students.

## References

- Buford, M. & Nester, H. (2019, May 1). The plight of the undecided student. Retrieved from <https://www.nacweb.org/career-development/special-populations/the-plight-of-the-undecided-student/>
- Commission for Postsecondary Education. (2000, Nov. 28). Comprehensive Statewide Plan for Postsecondary Education. Retrieved from <https://ccpe.nebraska.gov/sites/ccpe.nebraska.gov/files/COMP%20PLAN-updated%20October%202018.pdf>
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- Krueger, N. (2017, June 16). Preparing students for jobs that don't exist. *ISTE Blog*. Retrieved from <https://www.iste.org/explore/ISTE-blog/Preparing-students-for-jobs-that-don%27t-exist>
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- Robinson, K. (2001). *Out of our minds: Learning to be creative*. West Sussex: Capstone Publishing Limited.

TABLE 1: PROJECTED EXPENSES - NEW INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

	FY 19-20		FY 20-21		FY 21-22		FY 22-23		FY 23-24		Total	
	FTE	Cost	FTE	Cost	FTE	Cost	FTE	Cost	FTE	Cost	FTE	Cost
Personnel												
Faculty <sup>1</sup>						\$1,062		\$1,062		\$1,062		\$3,186
Professional											0	\$0
Graduate assistants											0	\$0
Support staff											0	\$0
<b>Subtotal</b>						<b>\$1,062</b>		<b>\$1,062</b>		<b>\$1,062</b>		<b>\$3,186</b>
<b>Operating</b>												
General Operating												
Equipment												\$0
New or renovated space												\$0
Library/Information Resources												\$0
Other: Marketing <sup>2</sup>		\$2,500		\$2,500								\$5,000
<b>Subtotal</b>												<b>\$5,000</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>		<b>\$2,500.00</b>		<b>\$2,500.00</b>		<b>\$1,062.00</b>		<b>\$1,062.00</b>		<b>\$1,062.00</b>		<b>\$8,186.00</b>

<sup>1</sup> By Year 3, it is expected that three independent study courses will need to be offered to support the capstone experience of this program. Faculty who teach Independent Study courses receive a salary of 2/3 tuition per student, rather than have it be computed as part of their contractual teaching load; therefore, no FTE was identified. With tuition costs set at \$177 per credit, and the expectation of a 3-credit capstone course (\$531 total tuition), the 2/3 tuition salary for one 3-credit course would be \$354. Three Independent Study courses per year would then equate to total salaries of \$1062 per year.

<sup>2</sup> \$2,500 each year for Years 1 and 2 is included for marketing expenses to create awareness of this new program option at Peru State College.

**TABLE 2: REVENUE SOURCES FOR PROJECTED EXPENSES - NEW INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM**

	FY 19-20 Year 1	FY20-21 Year 2	FY 21-22 Year 3	FY 22-23 Year 4	FY 23-24 Year 5	Total
Reallocation of Existing Funds						\$0
Required New Public Funds						\$0
1. State Funds						\$0
2. Local Tax Funds (community colleges)						\$0
Tuition and Fees <sup>1</sup>	\$34,720	\$62,496	\$83,328	\$104,160	\$104,160	\$388,864
Other Funding (N/A)						\$0
<b>Total revenue for new program</b>	<b>\$34,720</b>	<b>\$62,496</b>	<b>\$83,328</b>	<b>\$104,160</b>	<b>\$104,160</b>	<b>\$388,864</b>

<sup>1</sup> Since we do not know what tuition and fees will be after Year 1, the same amount of \$6944 per student has been used to compute all five years, as this would be the minimum amount of revenue that this program will generate.

Tuition and Fees Revenue	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Graduates
Existing Students	0	5	9	12	12	
Less: attrition		1	2	2	2	
Plus: New students	5	5	5	5	5	
Less: Students who graduate				3	3	6
<b>Total Student after graduation</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	
<b>Total Students each year (includes seniors)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	
<b>Tuition and Fees Revenue <sup>1</sup></b>						
Credit hour cost	\$ 177	\$ 177	\$ 177	\$ 177	\$ 177	
Average credit hours taken per year	28	28	28	28	28	
Total tuition revenue per student	\$ 4,956	\$ 4,956	\$ 4,956	\$ 4,956	\$ 4,956	
Per-credit fees	\$71	\$71	\$71	\$71	\$71	
Fees based on 28 credits	\$1,988	\$1,988	\$1,988	\$1,988	\$1,988	
<b>Total tuition/fee revenue per student</b>	<b>\$6,944</b>	<b>\$6,944</b>	<b>\$6,944</b>	<b>\$6,944</b>	<b>\$6,944</b>	
<b>Total tuition/fee revenue for new program</b>	<b>\$34,720</b>	<b>\$62,496</b>	<b>\$83,328</b>	<b>\$104,160</b>	<b>\$104,160</b>	<b>\$388,864</b>