

PROPOSAL: Create the Interdisciplinary Design Major

Background

The Undergraduate Studies Council of the Faculty Senate has approved the creation of the Interdisciplinary Design Major offered by Richmond Institute for Design and Innovation in the College of Fine Arts.

The purpose of this proposed program is to best serve student experience and address an identified need within the Richmond Institute for Design + Innovation (RIDI). Each year, students who perform well in Interior Architecture and Product Design coursework nonetheless transfer out of our programs in search of more flexible academic options. Or seek dual education in both interior and product design. Many of these students express continued interest in design studies but are unable to see a path forward that balances their design education with other areas of personal or professional interest.

The Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Design provides such a pathway. By creating a broad, liberal arts–oriented program anchored in RIDI coursework, this degree will retain students who wish to continue design studies while allowing for greater curricular flexibility. It aligns with the Institute’s mission to advance design as both a professional practice and a mode of inquiry by giving students opportunities to connect design foundations with disciplines across the arts, humanities, sciences, and business.

In addition, this program responds to broader shifts in higher education and industry, where employers increasingly value adaptable thinkers who can navigate interdisciplinary contexts. The proposed BA in Interdisciplinary Design positions students to engage with design thinking as a form of inquiry, problem-solving, and cultural critique, while fostering individualized academic pathways through minors and electives. In doing so, the program both expands access to design education and strengthens RIDI’s ability to attract and retain diverse learners.

Recommended Action

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