

Advising Students Who Transition into IDIS

Students find their way into the Interdisciplinary Studies (IDIS) major through various avenues. Those who change their major to IDIS may have not found a singular major that is able to fulfill their academic goals; others may not have met the internal requirements of other programs and were guided to IDIS as an alternative pathway to complete their college degree. Either way, students transitioning into IDIS are looking for their new academic home that plays upon their strengths and supports their post graduation goals.



► ADVISING TIPS

Utilize a Strengths-Based Approach

Help students to identify strengths they already have. For example, a student may be creative for not following an existing academic path. Perhaps a student is a critical thinker as they are able to build connections between their courses.

Discuss how students can apply these strengths to their work in the IDIS major and future career path. How might they be able to leverage their unique experience, knowledge, and skills from an IDIS major as they move on to graduate school or the job market?

Deal with Disappointment

Students may come into the IDIS major with a mix of emotions, such as anxious about their new path, disappointed about not progressing in their previous major, or excited about exploring a new program. Assessing how a student feels about this transition can help you better assist them.

Recognize that a student may feel a little lost and will have questions both about academic and career paths, requirements, and timelines. Additional questions may come up after your first meeting. Consider finding time to follow up a week or two after meeting to see if they have questions now that they have had time to process and reflect.

► CAMPUS RESOURCES

Career Services and Advising Center

Hammond 318
careercenter@fitchburgstate.edu
978.665.3151

Services Offered include: Career Assessment, Alumni Job Shadowing, Career Advising, Career Action Planning

Department of Humanities Chair and IDIS Coordinator

Dr. David Svolba dsvolba@fitchburgstate.edu

Explore Career Fields and Forge a New Path

Discuss career goals with your advisee. Explore what potential career paths they are interested in and why. Support students in exploring the variety of routes to a particular career and potential adjacent careers that they may not be aware of.

Consider the STRONG Interest Inventory career assessment or Alumni Job Shadowing available through Career Services and Advising.

Utilize the prefilled Career Action Plans, or have a student make their own: fitchburgstate.edu/action-plans.

Students can explore their different careers using O*Net: onetonline.org or mynextmove.org and see the versatility of a variety of majors with whatcanidowiththismajor.com.

Help students to focus less on the labels (major titles) and more on their actual skills. Normalizing that often the title of your major is less important than your knowledge, skills, and experiences. With the exception of licensure, often your major doesn't matter that much in the professional world or graduate school (obviously there are exceptions to this). Often having a more diverse set of knowledge and skills actually makes you MORE competitive in the job market.

► INITIAL MEETING CONVERSATION STARTERS

The initial advising meeting is a critical time to develop rapport with new IDIS students, and sets the foundation for students to develop positive feelings about their new path. Try these conversation starters:

- » Tell me about your path to choosing the IDIS major.
- » What class has been your favorite so far and why?
- » Tell me about a time when you were really enjoying what you were doing.
- » What might people who know you say your strengths are? What do you think your strengths are?
- » What skills and knowledge do you want to develop?

Consider talking about your own career path and exploration, particularly if you too took an indirect route to end up where you are professionally.