

Use this form to request authorization to plan a new baccalaureate major, associate degree program, or graduate program; formal approval or waiver of an Intent to Plan is required before a university may submit a related full proposal request for a new program. The Executive Director and/or their designees may request additional information. After the university President approves the Intent to Plan, submit a signed copy to the Executive Director through the System Academic Officer through the proper process. Only post the Intent to Plan to the university website for review by other universities after approval by the Executive Director, System Academic Officer or designee. This form is meant to capture critical elements for stakeholders to review prior to a full proposal.

University NSU - Northern State University

Degree MS : Master of Science

Name of Major X999 : New Major Requested

Interdisciplinary Studies

No

Specialization Required? *Note: If the new proposed program includes specific specializations within it, complete and submit a New Specialization Form for each proposed specialization and attach it to this form. Since specializations appear on transcripts, they require Board approval.*

College/Department 5E : NSU School of Education/NTE : Teacher Education

Intended Date of Full Proposal Fall 2026

Planned CIP Code 30.0000

Program Description

1. Provide the working program description that may appear in the university catalog.

The Master of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies is a flexible graduate program designed for students whose academic or professional goals transcend traditional discipline-specific boundaries. This customizable degree empowers students to design an individualized plan of study by selecting and integrating courses from multiple fields, creating a unique program that aligns with their personal interests, career aspirations, and/or research objectives. Working in close consultation with faculty advisors, students identify two (2) or three (3) areas of emphasis and craft a coherent curriculum that fosters advanced knowledge, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills across disciplines. Whether preparing for leadership roles, pursuing applied professional pathways, or laying the foundation for further doctoral study, graduates emerge with a degree tailored to their needs and distinguished by its breadth, adaptability, and intellectual rigor.

Strategic Impact

2. Describe how the program fits in with the institutional mission, strategic plan, existing institutional program array, and academic priorities.

Institutional Mission

The M.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies program directly supports Northern State University's mission to provide diverse academic, civic, social, and cultural opportunities that prepare students for their future endeavors while enriching the local and regional community. The program embodies this mission by offering a flexible, student-centered curriculum that empowers learners to integrate knowledge across disciplines, engage in experiential learning, and pursue individualized educational pathways aligned with their professional and personal goals. This interdisciplinary approach embodies the liberal arts nature of Northern State University and cultivates graduates who are critical thinkers, problem solvers, and leaders equipped to contribute meaningfully to the community.

Strategic Plan

The M.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies aligns closely with the Northern State University's strategic plan in several key areas:

Strategic Priority #1: Preparing Engaged Citizens and Professionals

The program develops critical thinking, problem-solving, and leadership skills through a customizable curriculum that integrates liberal arts and professional education. Students engage in experiential learning experiences that mirror the strategic goal of fostering engaged citizens and professionals who think critically and lead effectively.

Strategic Priority #2: Nurturing an Inclusive and Supportive Culture

By allowing students to design programs that reflect their unique goals and backgrounds, the program advances inclusivity and student empowerment. The collaborative advising process and individualized curriculum model promote a culture of academic support and shared success among students and faculty.

Strategic Priority #3: Growing the Campus Community

The program's flexible design and emphasis on interdisciplinary integration attract a diverse range of students, from working professionals seeking advancement to recent graduates exploring cross-disciplinary interests, supporting enrollment growth and engagement initiatives identified in the strategic plan.

Strategic Priority #4: Expanding Collaborative Partnerships

The program encourages students to pursue interdisciplinary connections that have the potential to extend into partnerships with local organizations, businesses, and community agencies depending on students' desired plan of study.

Strategic Priority #5: Providing an Outstanding Liberal Arts Experience

Through its combination of intellectual breadth and professional relevance, the program exemplifies Northern State University's commitment to an outstanding liberal arts educational experience. The program's flexible curriculum supports experiential learning through research, applied projects, and community engagement, ensuring that students not only integrate knowledge but also apply it in meaningful ways.

Existing Institutional Program Array

The M.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies program will replace the existing M.S.Ed. in Educational Studies: Individualized Interdisciplinary Studies program at Northern State University. The existing program is designated as an M.S.Ed., though the program currently only requires students to complete two courses through the Millicent Atkins School of Education. Replacing the existing program with an M.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies will better reflect the curriculum of the existing program and more clearly emphasize the interdisciplinary focus of the existing program.

Academic Priorities

The M.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies program operationalizes Northern State University's mission and strategic priorities and embodies the university's liberal arts identity by fostering academic innovation, interdisciplinary collaboration, and student-centered learning. It prepares graduates to thrive as reflective, adaptable professionals and engaged citizens who contribute to the vitality of the region and beyond.

If the program does not align to the strategic plan, provide a compelling rationale for the institution to offer the program.

N/A

3. How does the program connect to the Board of Regent's Strategic Plan?

Goal #3: Academic Excellence, Student Success, and Educational Attainment

The proposed M.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies advances Goal #3 by expanding access to high-quality, flexible graduate education that promotes student success and degree attainment. The program's customizable structure allows students to design cohesive plans of study aligned with their academic interests and professional goals while maintaining rigorous academic standards through faculty oversight and advising.

By leveraging existing graduate coursework across multiple disciplines, the program ensures academic excellence while fostering advanced critical thinking, integrative learning, and applied problem-solving skills. Its HyFlex and online delivery options further support degree completion for working professionals and place-bound students, directly contributing to increased graduate attainment within the Regental system. The individualized advising model promotes persistence and completion by helping students create intentional, well-structured programs of study that reflect both intellectual depth and interdisciplinary breadth.

Goal #4: Workforce and Economic Development

The M.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies aligns with Goal #4 by preparing graduates with adaptable, cross-disciplinary skill sets that respond to evolving workforce and economic needs in South Dakota. Many contemporary workforce challenges require professionals who can integrate knowledge across multiple domains rather than operate within a single disciplinary silo.

The program’s flexibility allows students to align their graduate studies with industry demands, emerging fields, and career advancement opportunities. By serving working professionals and supporting upskilling and reskilling initiatives, the program strengthens the state’s workforce capacity and contributes to long-term economic vitality. Graduates emerge equipped to address complex, real-world problems that impact regional communities and organizations.

Goal #5: Financial Health Competitiveness

The proposed program supports Goal #5 by maximizing institutional efficiency and strengthening Northern State University’s competitive position within the Regental system. The degree is designed to utilize existing courses and faculty expertise across departments, minimizing the need for new resources while enhancing cross-departmental collaboration. This model promotes fiscal responsibility and strategic use of institutional assets.

Additionally, redesignating the current M.S.Ed. program as an M.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies more accurately reflects the curriculum and improves program clarity for prospective students. This alignment enhances marketability and competitiveness while maintaining cost-effective program delivery. By attracting working professionals and students seeking flexible graduate pathways, the program has the potential to contribute to stable enrollment and sustainable revenue generation without requiring substantial new infrastructure investment.

Program Summary

4. If a new degree is proposed, what is the rationale?

This question refers to the type of degree, not the program. For example, if your university has authorization to offer the Bachelor of Science and the program requested is a Bachelor of Science, then the request is not for a new degree.

The rationale for needing the M.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies at Northern State University relates to a need to redesign the current M.S.Ed. in Educational Studies: Individualized Interdisciplinary Studies program. The current M.S.Ed. program should not be designated as an M.S.Ed. since students are only required to complete two courses through the Millicent Atkins School of Education. Thus, the proposed M.S. program will replace the existing M.S.Ed. program to better reflect the curriculum of the existing M.S.Ed. program. Additionally, the curriculum of the program will be revised to allow for students to create more intentional and cohesive plans of study.

5. What modality/modalities will be used to offer the new program?

Note: The accreditation requirements of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) require Board approval for a university to offer programs off-campus and through distance delivery.

	Yes/No	Intended Start Date	
On Campus	Yes	Fall 2026	
	Yes/No	Location(s)	Intended Start Date
Off Campus Location	Yes	Huron	Fall 2026
	Yes/No	Delivery Method(s)	Intended Start Date
Distance Delivery	Yes	HyFlex/Online	Fall 2026

	Yes/No	Identify Institutions
Does another BOR institution already have authorization to offer the program online?	Yes	South Dakota State University (M.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies) University of South Dakota (M.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies)

6. If the program will be offered through distance delivery, identify the planned instructional modality:

Both / HyFlex

Academic Quality

7. What peer institutions and current national standards will be referenced to develop the curriculum for this program? Include links to at least 3 comparable programs at peer institutions and links to national or accreditation standards, if any.

None of Northern State University's peer institutions (i.e., Bemidji State University, Black Hills State University, Dakota State University, Minnesota State University Moorhead, Minot State University, Northwestern Oklahoma State University, Oregon Institute of Technology, Southern Oregon University, University of Texas of the Permian Basin, and Western Colorado University) offer the same/similar program. Thus, the current program at Northern State University (M.S.Ed. Educational Studies: Individualized Interdisciplinary Studies) and the comparable programs at both South Dakota State University (M.S. Interdisciplinary Studies) and the University of South Dakota (M.A. Interdisciplinary Studies) will be used for reference.

These three programs are very similar in nature, as students are able to select from a wide variety of courses to create their own plans of study. Interdisciplinary programs very frequently utilize courses that are offered as a requirement in other programs at the institution, and this model will be followed with the proposed M.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies at Northern State University. The proposed M.S. will allow students to create their plans of study by identifying 2-3 areas of emphasis from the 30 total areas of emphasis offered in the program, including emphases that lead to a graduate certificate, interdisciplinary emphases (e.g., mixed course prefixes), and discipline-specific emphases (e.g., same/similar prefixes).

8. What program accreditation is available, if any?

None

9. Will the proposed program pursue accreditation or certifications?

No

If no, why has the department elected not to pursue accreditation for the program?

There is no accreditation available for interdisciplinary studies.

Duplication and Competition

10. Do any related programs exist at other public universities in South Dakota?

*A list of existing programs is available through the university websites and the RIS Reporting: Academic Reports Database. If there are no related programs within the Regental system, indicate **none**.*

Yes, a similar program is currently offered at South Dakota State University (M.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies), the University of South Dakota (M.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies), and Northern State University (M.S.Ed. Educational Studies: Individualized Interdisciplinary Studies).

A. If yes, defend the need for an additional program within the state, Include IPEDS enrollment data and additional data as needed.

The rationale for needing the M.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies at Northern State University relates to a need to redesign that current M.S.Ed. in Educational Studies: Individualized Interdisciplinary Studies program. The current M.S.Ed. program should not be designated as an M.S.Ed. since students are only required to complete two courses through the Millicent Atkins School of Education. Thus, the proposed M.S. program will replace the existing M.S.Ed. program to better reflect the curriculum of the existing M.S.Ed. program.

B. If yes, would this program be a candidate for Regental system collaboration?

At this time, the proposed program would not be a Regental system collaboration, but the flexibility of the proposed program would allow for collaboration if desired.

11. Do any related programs exist at any non-Regental college or university within 150 miles of the university?

List those programs here:

None.

A. If yes, use IPEDS to identify the enrollment in those programs.

N/A

B. What evidence suggests there is unmet student demand for the proposed program, or that the proposed program would attract students away from the existing program?

The primary rationale for modifying the existing program at Northern is to separate the two specializations currently in the program and to clarify that the existing program will be for helping students gain initial licensure. The new MS in Interdisciplinary Studies allows students to earn a degree that fits the courses they complete and the learning outcomes they achieve. The new MS Interdisciplinary Studies creates clarity for students from marketing through application and from program to program completion to transcript.

Market Demand

This section establishes the market demand for the proposed program (eg Regental system need, institutional need, workforce need). Use the following sources for your data:

- [South Dakota Department of Labor & Regulation](#)
- [O-Net](#)
- [US Department of Labor Projections Central](#)
- SDBOR Workforce and Degree Gap Analysis Report

12. What is the expected growth of the industry or occupation in South Dakota and nationally?

Include the number of openings, as well as the percentage of growth when possible.

The proposed M.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies program will prepare graduates for a wide variety of industries and occupations. Over the course of the past ten years, graduates of the current interdisciplinary program at Northern State University have started careers as university professors, university residence hall directors, university football coaches, university academic advisors, university admissions representatives, K-12 teachers and coaches, and law enforcement officers. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of the proposed program, a wide variety of occupations are attainable for graduates. The expected growth of a variety of program-related occupations, organized by Standard Occupational Classification (SOC), according to the South Dakota Department of Labor & Regulation (SD, 2022-2032 projections) [1], O-Net (ON, 2024-2034 projections), and the United States Department of Labor Projections Central (US, 2022-2032 projections) are presented in the tables below.

[1] https://dlr.sd.gov/lmic/lb/2024/lbart_sept2024_occ_projections_fastest_growing.aspx

[2] <https://www.onetonline.org/find/bright?b=0>

[3] https://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/ecopro_09062023.pdf

Projected Percent Growth in South Dakota

SOC	Occupation	SD	ON	US
11-9031	Education and Childcare Administrators, Preschool and Daycare	4.29%	6%	6.3%
21-1012	Educational, Guidance, and Career Counselors and Advisors	9.07%	10%	10.0%
25-9031	Instructional Coordinators	6.25%	7%	6.5%
27-2022	Coaches and Scouts	11.46%	12%	11.5%
33-3051	Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	3.09%	3%	3.0%
39-9041	Residential Advisors	6.42%	6%	6.1%

Projected Number of Annual Openings in South Dakota

SOC	Occupation	SD	ON	US
11-9031	Education and Childcare Administrators, Preschool and Daycare	11	10	10
21-1012	Educational, Guidance, and Career Counselors and Advisors	74	70	70
25-9031	Instructional Coordinators	44	40	40
27-2022	Coaches and Scouts	198	200	200
33-3051	Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	158	160	160
39-9041	Residential Advisors	302	300	300

Projected Percent Growth in the Nation

SOC	Occupation	ON	US
11-9031	Education and Childcare Administrators, Preschool and Daycare	-3%	-2.9%
21-1012	Educational, Guidance, and Career Counselors and Advisors	4%	5.4%
25-9031	Instructional Coordinators	1%	2.5%
27-2022	Coaches and Scouts	6%	9.2%
33-3051	Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	3%	3.3%
39-9041	Residential Advisors	4%	6.0%

Projected Number of Annual Openings in the Nation

SOC	Occupation	ON	US
11-9031	Education and Childcare Administrators, Preschool and Daycare	5,500	4,600
21-1012	Educational, Guidance, and Career Counselors and Advisors	31,000	26,600
25-9031	Instructional Coordinators	21,900	19,200
27-2022	Coaches and Scouts	41,800	38,400
33-3051	Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	53,700	55,000
39-9041	Residential Advisors	17,400	17,600

13. What evidence, if any, suggests there are unfilled openings in South Dakota or nationally?

The number of unfilled openings in March 2026 of a variety of program-related occupations, organized by Standard Occupational Classification (SOC), according to the South Dakota Department of Labor & Regulation (SD, 2022-2032 projections) are presented in the table below. [4]

[4] https://dlr.sd.gov/lmic/lb/2024/lbart_sept2024_occ_projections_fastest_growing.aspx

Number of Unfilled Openings in South Dakota

SOC	Occupation	Total	New
11-9031	Education and Childcare Administrators, Preschool and Daycare	11	6
21-1012	Educational, Guidance, and Career Counselors and Advisors	22	8
25-9031	Instructional Coordinators	12	4
27-2022	Coaches and Scouts	159	65
33-3051	Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	20	5
39-9041	Residential Advisors	41	20

14. What salaries can program graduates expect to earn in South Dakota and nationally?

The expected annual salaries of a variety of program-related occupations, organized by Standard Occupational Classification (SOC), according to the South Dakota Department of Labor & Regulation (SD, 2022-2032 projections) and the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (US, 2024-2034 projections) are presented as the mean and/or median (Mdn) in the tables below. [5]

[5] https://dlr.sd.gov/lmic/lb/2024/lbart_sept2024_occ_projections_fastest_growing.aspx

Expected Salaries in South Dakota

SOC	Occupation	Mean	Mdn
11-9031	Education and Childcare Administrators, Preschool and Daycare	\$56,620	\$55,270
21-1012	Educational, Guidance, and Career Counselors and Advisors	\$54,930	\$52,450
25-9031	Instructional Coordinators	\$65,670	\$58,990
27-2022	Coaches and Scouts	\$41,950	\$34,440
33-3051	Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	\$62,940	\$60,300
39-9041	Residential Advisors	\$36,400	\$36,780

Expected Salaries in the Nation

SOC	Occupation	Mdn
11-9031	Education and Childcare Administrators, Preschool and Daycare	\$56,270
21-1012	Educational, Guidance, and Career Counselors and Advisors	\$65,140
25-9031	Instructional Coordinators	\$74,720
27-2022	Coaches and Scouts	\$45,920
33-3051	Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	\$76,290
39-9041	Residential Advisors	\$39,180

15. Optional: Provide any additional evidence of regional demand for the program.

e.g. prospective student interest survey data, letters of support from employers, community needs...

N/A

Student Demand

16. Provide evidence of student completers/graduates at that degree level at peer institutions that offer the same/similar program using data obtained from IPEDS.

Choose programs not already listed in question 11. Use the most recent year available.

University Name	State	Program Name	Number of Degrees Conferred in Program	Total Number of Conferrals at Level (Undergrad or Grad)
South Dakota State University	SD : South Dakota	MS Interdisciplinary Studies	32	347
University of South Dakota	SD : South Dakota	MA Interdisciplinary Studies	19	633
Northern State University	SD : South Dakota	MSED Educational Studies: Individualized Interdisciplinary Studies	4	86

17. What evidence suggests there is interest from prospective students for this program at the university?

The existing M.S.Ed. in Educational Studies: Individualized Interdisciplinary Studies program demonstrates ongoing interest from students seeking flexible graduate options. Redesignating the program as an M.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies will improve clarity in recruitment materials and more accurately communicate the program's structure and purpose. This clearer alignment is expected to enhance prospective student understanding and interest. Additionally, the flexibility of HyFlex and online delivery modalities aligns with demand from working professionals seeking accessible graduate education options.

Enrollment

18. Are students enrolling in this program expected to be new to the university or redirected from existing programs at the university?

Include the number of openings, as well as the percentage of growth when possible.

The majority of students initially enrolled in the proposed M.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies are expected to be redirected from the existing M.S.Ed. in Educational Studies: Individualized Interdisciplinary Studies, as this proposal represents a redesign and redesignation of that program. Over time, modest new enrollment growth is anticipated due to improved degree clarity, broader disciplinary positioning, and enhanced marketability of the M.S. designation.

The program's flexible structure will attract re-entry graduate students - students who stopped out on a master's degree and prefer a flexible pathway to complete their degree before their credits expire.

The new MS Interdisciplinary Studies may also attract working professionals who would not otherwise enroll in a traditional discipline-specific graduate program. Initial enrollment levels are expected to be comparable to the current M.S.Ed. program, with gradual growth as awareness increases.

19. Narrative Description of the preliminary estimates on annual enrollment in this program by year six

Include all students within the program, not just those new to the program.

Because this proposal builds on one specialization in an existing program, enrollment projections are expected to mirror current enrollment trends during the transition period. A conservative projection model would anticipate:

- Year 1-2: Enrollment comparable to current M.S.Ed. levels - approximately 6 students per year
- Year 3-4: Modest growth due to improved clarity and marketing - approximately 10-12 students per year
- Year 5-6: Stabilized enrollment reflecting both redirected and newly recruited students - approximately 12-15 students per year

By year six, total enrollment is projected to exceed current program enrollment, reflecting increased accessibility through online and HyFlex delivery and improved alignment between program title and curriculum. Additionally, Northern will promote this program to graduate students who begin a master's program and stop out. This program will be offered as a degree completion option for students who started a master's in one area and decided they wanted to change focuses - this will allow them to not lose the credits from the original program.