

**"I have spread my dreams under your feet;  
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams."**

**W.B. Yeats  
(Kehl, 1983)**

## **Chapter 8:**

### **THE LEARNING NEEDS STATEMENT**

As previously discussed, the goals statement is grounded in your significant learnings and accomplishments from the past providing your vision of the future and your personal goals, and academic program as one aspect of those goals. In contrast, the learning needs statement focuses upon specific short-term goals of your academic study that are implied by those academic goals. It builds upon information introduced in the goals statement, and specifically discusses those areas of proficiency common to others engaged in an undergraduate study of the liberal arts weighing those against the skills and knowledge that you already possess; now that you have expressed your goals, what do you need to learn to obtain them? Consider learning needs to be those areas in which you need additional skills, knowledge or experiences, and includes a discussion, of the learning needs implied by the Boyer Model.

#### **Developing An Awareness of Your Learning Needs**

After you have discussed the goals for your academic experience, identify those aspects of your degree and specialization(s) that you need and/or want to learn about. Break your educational goals into more specific objectives, smaller and achievable components (or courses) that compose your degree proposal. For example, if the primary emphasis in your degree proposal is women's studies, what are those academic areas that someone who has an undergraduate emphasis in women's studies should know about and be able to discuss? If one of your areas of interest includes women's history, what are the more specific areas in which you need to focus your degree? What do you need to learn? Move beyond your own speculation and consult with experts in the fields relevant to your goals.

Secondly identify your strengths and weaknesses and experiences in the eight areas of the Boyer Model. What courses did you take in the first two years of college and how do they meet the needs of Heritage or Nature? Did you have experiences that gave you insights and experiences equivalent to taking a college course? What areas are missing as you look at the balance across a 120 credit degree? To further articulate a perspective on the knowledge and skills you need, inventory those that you already possess. This awareness will enable you to weigh your current knowledge.

With this knowledge you can determine those aspects of learning which you want to develop

and/or refine. What areas of knowledge and skills do you need to develop to refine your degree program? In your search to determine your learning needs, note which of the areas of knowledge and skills need moderate development, and which ones need extensive development, or which skills you already possess.

Gather any and all relevant information, advice and expertise on areas that you have chosen to pursue. Consult with faculty members and other experts who have some familiarity with the area. Consult other college catalogs and professional accrediting bodies which may exist in related areas.

The learning needs statement should include a summary of your exploration and a discussion of your findings, including any contradictory advice. Add your opinions and decisions about appropriate learning objectives within the context of your current competencies and deficiencies. A summary listing of learning needs associated with the degree along with those that have been met should complete this section.

**"Include the knower in the known."**

**Julian Jaynes  
(Kehl, 1983)**

## **Chapter 9:**

### **THE INVENTORY OF LEARNING RESOURCES**

Before you enrolled in LIS you probably explored the UIS catalog and other resources available to augment your learning process. As a component of the degree proposal, the inventory of learning resources identifies those people, organizations, associations, books/articles or activities (e.g., participating in conferences) that you consider potentially useful in the development of a comprehensive academic curriculum.

The purpose of the inventory is to help you clarify for yourself and to inform your adviser about those resources that will support and strengthen your developing knowledge and skills as you progress through your degree program. While your initial list may be general, your inventory should grow and become more specialized as you become aware of additional opportunities statewide, nationally or internationally. If you are uncertain where to start in compiling your inventory, speak to your adviser or other students and faculty members who share your interests and specializations and who may have awarenesses of prominent spokespeople, significant scholarly works, or major professional organizations in your field.

Your inventory should name each entry by its title, address, phone number(s), contact person(s), and your rationale for including it. Previous LIS students have included such resources as individuals, professional organizations, libraries, research facilities, or other universities in their inventories. In addition, many students have included a "core" bibliography of books, journals, internet-based resources and professional newsletters.

As previously mentioned, it is expected that your inventory will grow and/or change throughout your degree program. Although there are no minimum or maximum numbers of resources to include, you should generally include a variety of resources, and a reasonable selection. Names of UIS faculty should be listed with a brief description of their relevancy for your degree. You should also provide brief titles and/or descriptions of relevant qualifications of other persons listed.

**"Sit, walk or run, but don't wobble."**

**Zen (Kehl, 1983)**

## **Chapter 10:**

### **NARRATIVE CURRICULUM/LEARNING STRATEGIES**

The narrative curriculum describes all courses (e.g., credit for prior learning, independent field projects, tutorials, courses transferred from other universities, etc.) that you plan to include as part of your 60 credit degree contract. There are two components to the narrative curriculum.

Part One: Courses and Rationale

- **Course number and Course title:**

Use the title of the course listed in the UIS catalog or a catalog of another university. In the event that you are taking an independent study or tutorial, name the emphasis of your study in title format.

- **Your Rationale:**

Use the description of the course listed in the UIS catalog, and be sure to add your rationale for including the course in your degree proposal. As stated above, if you are taking an independent study course or tutorial, describe the emphasis of your study.

- **Number of credit hours:**

Include the number of credit hours for each of the courses that you will be taking.

- **Boyer categories assigned:**

**NOTE:** Many interdisciplinary courses can fall into more than one category. List the primary category first.

Use this format in describing all courses that you are including in your degree proposal, including:

- ◆ university requirements;
- ◆ LIS program requirements;
- ◆ program electives;
- ◆ minor requirements (where applicable); and
- ◆ if you have general education deficiencies these must be accounted for in your degree proposal.

## **Part Two: Summary Degree Contract Plan**

When you have completed a detailed presentation of your curriculum and rationale, summarize the information on the degree contract plan. The summary curriculum list presents a concrete picture of your time frames for completing your degree. Simply list the courses (course numbers and titles only) and number of hours and totals that you plan to take according to a tentative calendar and Boyer category. Try to obtain information about those courses which are offered on a cyclical basis (e.g. every Spring, every three years, etc.) in order to anticipate appropriate sequencing and availability. NOTE: See the LIS Website for a Online History File that includes all courses, descriptions and history of when it has been offered.

By presenting your degree curriculum in an organized, narrative manner you will be able to stay focused and directed during your degree program. Further, you will let your adviser know that you are proceeding through your program in a thoughtful and methodical way. It is not unusual to revise your degree plan one, or several times during your academic program as you become aware of additional resources and/or opportunities. Revisions to courses should be approved by your academic advisor by submitting a revised contract noting courses deleted and their replacements with an explanation. Revised time frames do not need approval. Careful and thoughtful planning at the onset allows these types of transitions to occur smoothly and thoughtfully.

*“The difference between the right word and the almost right word  
is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug.”*

**Mark Twain  
(Kehl, 1983)**

## **Chapter 11:**

### **THE LIBERAL AND INTEGRATIVE STUDIES SENIOR PAPER**

As we've discussed, the self-designed degree process at UIS promotes reflection and integration. The degree contract requires that you plan an integrated curriculum, describing your rationale for each course and learning project you propose. The liberal and integrative studies project (LISP) asks you to make a retrospective assessment of your learning experiences. This will be developed in LIS 451, Senior Seminar in the final semester of your course work.

Developing the liberal and integrative studies project paper is completed within the context of LIS 451, "Senior Seminar;" as such, it is completed at the end of your degree program. To enroll you must have completed LIS 301, have a writing sample and an approved degree plan on file in the Program office and be in the final semester of your coursework.

The liberal and integrative studies project paper should add a "scholarly dimension" to your degree proposal; that is, this paper should attest to the intellectual depth you've developed as a result of participation in your academic program. As you reflect upon your learning:

- describe the courses you've taken;
- discuss your educational philosophy and how that was implemented or demonstrated in your degree journey;
- mention the books you have read;
- quote from writers who have had the most profound impact upon your learning;
- discuss the contradictions you have discovered;
- indicate common threads that may help integrate the different ideas, approaches, theories, etc.;
- discuss the implications of your learning in terms of insight, discoveries, and modifications of your degree plan;
- discuss what you have learned in each of the Boyer categories; and,
- attach a bibliography listing those sources which formed the basis of your discussion.

#### **Suggestions**

The following suggestions may further assist you as you develop your liberal and integrative studies project paper.

- Work closely with LIS 451 instructor.
- Don't rely upon your memory of your academic experiences as your only resource.
- Review relevant course materials, such as books, papers, or notes, and use them as references while you're writing.
- Remember to name the sources you've referenced in the text of your paper.

## **Chapter 12:**

### **THE HONORS THESIS**

This is an optional requirement for LIS students and is undertaken in your final semester for two hours credit. The closure project is not simply a tutorial or independent study (e.g. LIS 499 or LIS 380). Its content must be central to your entire curriculum. This means that it must build on some of your core course work and/or independent study. Ask yourself "What is the most advanced and important understanding or ability with which I want my curriculum to end?" In other words, "What do I want as the culmination of the personal and academic growth I will have sought in pursuing my curriculum?" By designing your closure project as an answer to either form of this question you will make it central in the intended sense.

Before your last semester of coursework and entry into LIS 451, contact your LIS faculty advisor about your intention to do an honors thesis. Your advisor will assess your ability to carry out this project on the basis of your G.P.A. (3.5 or above), your writing ability (submit a sample to your advisor), and the centralness of your proposed project to your LIS degree. Once you have been given the okay by your LIS advisor, you must submit a proposal to your LIS advisor and negotiate with a UIS faculty member with expertise in your chosen area outlining your objectives, rationale, resources, work plan and timeline. See guidelines for independent studies for procedures for registration. Once this has been approved, you may carry out your project concurrently with LIS 451 and under direction of your UIS faculty member with expertise in your area of study.

## Chapter 13:

### GUIDELINES FOR INDEPENDENT STUDIES OR TUTORIALS

LIS 380 and LIS 499 are course numbers for independent study projects. All are offered for variable credit, ranging from 1 – 8 credit hours. Credit for a course at UIS is based on the assumption that a typical 4-credit course meets 3 ½ hours a week for 16 weeks (56 hours) and that typical student spends 2 hours of outside preparation time for every hour in class (112 hours).  $56 + 112 = 168$  hours.

For each independent study you conduct under the LIS prefix, you must develop an independent study proposal. These forms are available in the LIS office or online at the LIS website. A draft of your independent study must be completed at the time you contract the degree. Final forms must be completed prior to registration for the term in which the project is to be conducted.

An “Independent Study Proposal” form indicates a proposed title, topic, method of study, amount of instructor-student contact and means of evaluation, as well as the level of study and the hours of credit sought. With this proposal you will describe what you want to learn, how you intend to learn it, and how your learning will be evaluated. If the faculty member accepts the proposal, s(he) signs a “With Permission of Dean” (WPD) form that also must be approved by the appropriate dean and submitted to the Registrar’s office

The Independent Study Proposal Form asks you to draw on skills you have utilized in creating your degree proposal. Specifically, it directs your attention to the following questions:

1. What do you want to learn? (Objectives)
2. Why do you want to learn it? (Rationale)
3. What resources are available for you to draw on? (Resources)
4. How do you plan to use the resources to meet the objectives? (Work Plan)
5. How will you evaluate the effectiveness of your work? How will you document your learning? (Evaluation/Documentation)
6. When will you accomplish this learning? (Tentative Schedule)

Choose your UIS faculty sponsor on the basis of her/his expertise in the topic of your independent study. You may also choose an external resource person to work with a LIS faculty member who will turn in your grade. You might also choose a faculty sponsor who might work best with you to stimulate your learning. For example, if you tend to procrastinate, find a sponsor who will work with you on overcoming this.

Consult your sponsoring faculty member to obtain assistance in clarifying these components of your study. If a resource person outside the university will be involved in your study, s/he should also participate in the planning process.

## **SPECIFICS: HOW TO DEVELOP A PROPOSAL**

### **Objectives**

The goal is to write objectives that are clear, understandable, and realistic. Can you state clearly and in detail what you want to learn? To formulate your learning objectives, ask yourself: Which learning needs from my LIS degree proposal can I meet in this project? What information and understanding do I want to acquire? What skills do I want to learn or improve? Why? To clarify further your objectives, continue by asking yourself: What attitudes do I want to develop or change? Why? How and where will I use this information, skill, or attitude? How much of it do I need? How will I behave differently or what will be changed when I am finished? What do I want to be able to do when the project is finished? How many learning objectives do I want to set? How much time do I really have?

Learning objectives may be stated in a variety of ways. Some can refer to specific skills and levels of competence. Others may be more general, and exploratory, perhaps becoming clearer as you proceed. Many behaviorist approaches require that objectives be stated in terms of specific, measurable, behavioral outcomes. It may be helpful to think of learning objectives in terms of the discrepancy between where you are now and where you would like to be in the future with respect to a particular competence or ability or level of understanding. Precise outcomes may or may not be useful to you.

Objectives are often written in the form of observable activities that you will be able **to** do at the project's completion. Describe what you intend to learn using verbs such as identify, distinguish, compare, contrast, solve, differentiate, write, construct, apply, describe, demonstrate, communicate, draw, role play, list, critique, etc. Not all learning needs can be described adequately in this way, as the totality of that experience is more than information, skills, and attitudes.

### **Rationale:**

When you have completed the objectives section, ask yourself, "Why do I want to learn this?" Your answer should place the objectives within the larger context of your educational goals. How do your objectives relate to your overall degree plan? Refer to your Autobiography, Goals, and Learning Needs from your LIS degree proposal.

Which Learning Needs are you meeting within the framework of this independent study? Why do you need to acquire this information/skill/attitude? How is your Independent Study Proposal congruent with some component of the larger picture presented in your degree proposal?

**Resources:**

What relevant resources (people, books, films, laboratories, agencies, etc.) do you have available? You may find it helpful (a) to identify some of these resources by thinking of specific activities you will engage in to accomplish your learning and then (b) to ask what resources each activity makes use of. Attach lists of relevant materials (bibliography, film lists, etc.) to your Proposal.

**Work Plan and Tentative Schedule:**

How do you plan to use the resources and facilities to meet your learning objectives? Each learning objective should be addressed by one or more learning activities. Each activity should correspond to one or more of your stated learning objectives. Traditional approaches include attending lectures, participating in small group discussions, reading and expressing your reactions on paper or in discussion groups, examination, laboratory experiments, painting, photography, etc. Non-traditional approaches might include travel and discussion, film or videotape production, “hands-on” experience, writing a book or manual, building or creating something, keeping a journal, organizing a conference, etc.

When you have a tentative plan, consider a time frame. Try to stay within the framework of the university semester. Under “Tentative Schedule” indicate when the various activities of your plans will take place and when you will complete work on the concrete components of the plan. Schedule may be daily, weekly, and/or monthly task completion dates and/or specific deadline or performance dates. Include the frequency of contact with your faculty sponsor and the proposed completion dates for various stages of the project.

The work plan should reflect your thinking about how you are actually going to carry out your learning project. What logical sequence will you follow? What step-by-step procedure will you develop to complete your study?

**Evaluation/Documentation:**

What evidence will you produce to demonstrate to yourself and others that you have achieved your objectives? Documentation will largely consist of the products you have created as a result of your learning activities. These products may include research papers, copies of surveys, transcripts of interviews, video or audio tapes, maps, reports, letters sent and received, samples of work, products of artistic activity, records of experiments, performances, journals, etc. Discuss documentation methods with your faculty sponsor.

What criteria will be used to evaluate each piece of evidence? Criteria may differ for each learning objective and for each piece of evidence. Some criteria traditionally used in evaluating academic work include scholarliness and comprehensiveness of a written work, frequency and substance of journal entries, relevance of research completed, correctness of grammar or math, presence or absence of specified qualities in a performance, number of survey forms completed, usefulness of study, notes, etc.

If you experience difficulty in selecting criteria, ask yourself what aspects, traits, or characteristics of this piece of evidence are most important or meaningful and are most likely to clearly demonstrate that you achieved your learning objective?

Having selected criteria, what standards will you apply as you look at them? Standards imply judgment in terms of the criteria along a scale of values in order to determine the quality of that which is being judged. To set standards, ask what quantity or what degree of the specified criteria must be present (or absent) in the evidence in order to determine attainment of the learning objective. Ask: what level, how close to the ideal, how many, how few, how frequent, how fast, how clear, how graceful, how much, how long, etc.? Confer with your project evaluators about criteria and standards early in your study.

Your faculty sponsor usually will be the person to evaluate the evidence of your learning. You may also choose an external resource person (non-UIS faculty) with an expertise in your area of interest. In that case, the external resource person would be involved in the planning and would communicate your grade for the course to your UIS faculty sponsor. Usually, your LIS faculty advisor or another LIS faculty would agree to do this for you. Note that there is a signature space on the form for an external resource person should you be using one. It is helpful to include information about your external resource person's expertise and contact information with your proposal. Grading for independent studies and explorations is CR/NC. Your faculty sponsor will take your criteria and documentation into consideration in order to assign a grade for the course.

As you progress in your learning, you may wish to make changes in your Independent Study Proposal. Very often our ideas change as we work on a project. Simply consult with your faculty sponsor (and any other key resource persons) when you need to modify your description of the work you intend. Substantial departures from your original proposal must be negotiated with all parties involved. Amended proposals may have to be submitted.

## HELPFUL HINTS

LIS faculty strongly recommend that you and your faculty sponsor schedule a series of conferences to pace your reading or research, to set deadlines, and to commit yourself to a time frame.

Be realistic about how many hours you have to spend on your project. What other demands on your time are there? Are you trying to do more than you have time or energy for? How much can you reasonably accomplish in the time available? Students planning an independent study for the first time often try to do too much. Determine what is central to your goals and what, however relevant, is peripheral and focus your initial efforts on the central. Then, if time permits and it still seems appropriate, you can turn to some of your less important concerns. Of course, you will want to avoid the other extreme of making your project so narrow that it achieves only part of what you most wanted to do.

Then, too, your project need not be overly conventional. You may find it helpful to engage in fantasy as a means of stimulating thoughts and ideas:

The more fully we are conscious of dreams, daydreams, fantasies – i.e., free associations – the more likely we are to be in touch with what our total organism desires ....  
**Potent action arises when the organism is in touch with fullness of its desire, has explored in imagination and fantasy the probable results of alternative acts, and has taken the risk of decision and commitment to one among many possibilities.** (Sam Keen, To a Dancing God)

Independent study should be a learning experience in which you challenge yourself, grow, and develop new skills and ideas. Then, too, while your resource people will be concerned to keep you mindful of appropriate standards, you can generally count on them as wanting most of all to be helpful and supportive. Do not be afraid to be adventuresome.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE STEPS TO REGISTER FOR LIS INDEPENDENT STUDY**

1. Before proceeding make sure you have an approved LIS degree proposal. This independent study should be listed in the degree contract.
2. Draft an initial outline using categories from the LIS Independent Study Proposal.
3. Identify a faculty sponsor for your project who has expertise in your content area. Identifying an external resource may also be appropriate. Contact your faculty sponsor using the draft outline as a starting point.
4. When you and your sponsor have agreed on the nature of your project, complete the final version of the proposal and have the sponsor sign the LIS Independent Study Proposal form. A WPD

form (With Permission of Dean form) will be initiated by the liberal studies program secretary who initiates the permission to register process.

5. Your faculty sponsor will forward the WPD, with faculty signature, to the LIS Director with the Independent Study Proposal form both signed. You and your sponsor may each want to keep a copy of the proposal for your records.
6. The LIS director will forward the WPD and copy of the LIS Independent Study Proposal to the Dean of the college of your faculty sponsor for this project. The Dean's office will sign off on the WPD form and return both the WPD and Independent Study Proposal to the LIS Program Office where the course can then be entered in the computer system to the Office of Admissions and Records.
7. You will be notified of the reference number of your independent study in order so that you may register for the course.
8. Plan ahead. It is not easy to get all of these signatures at the last minute. Begin to work on your proposal in the semester before you plan to actually register.