

BA/MA DEGREE PROGRAM FOR RELIGIOUS STUDIES

DESCRIPTION

A concurrent Bachelor's/Master's degree program offers a select group of exceptional undergraduates the opportunity to begin graduate work while still an undergraduate and thereby complete the BA and MA degrees simultaneously and on an accelerated schedule. The entire program normally requires 5-6 years and permits six credit units to be double-counted toward both degrees. Otherwise requirements for the two degrees remain unchanged.

Such programs are widely available across campus. Departments that currently offer concurrent BA/MA programs include: Classics; Ecology and Evolutionary Biology; EALC; German; Psychology; Economics; Linguistics; Math; Integrated Physiology; French; Business and Engineering.

The advantages of such a program to our students and our department are manifold, including:

- The opportunity to present an undergraduate program that makes full use of our unique resources as a research university and that fosters meaningful undergraduate research.
- A path for our best students to continue their study of religion here through a range of courses of increasing sophistication and specialization.
- A source for us of in-state graduate students of proven ability to take our graduate level courses, increasing graduate enrollments and justifying more graduate classes.
- The opportunity to plot extended academic paths for undergraduates that include requisite language learning and study abroad.

ADMISSION TO THE PROGRAM

Applicants to the program must be full-time, continuously enrolled students with a minimum overall GPA of 3.0, and a 3.5 GPA in RLST courses. They must have completed at least 24 credit hours prior to admission to the concurrent BA/MA degree program, and must have satisfied any MAPS deficiencies (required by the Graduate School). Applications will include letters of recommendation from RLST faculty and will be evaluated by faculty as a whole, much as graduate applications are.

CONTINUATION IN THE PROGRAM

Students enrolled in the concurrent BA/MA program must maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 and 3.5 in the department. Concurrent degree students may not participate in the Time Out program; exceptions may be granted by the CDAC (Concurrent Degree Appeals Committee) based on a review of extenuating circumstances (Graduate School requirement). Each BA/MA student will be assigned a graduate advisor with whom s/he will meet regularly and will be required to demonstrate satisfactory progress toward degree to the advisor within the framework of the department's graduate student assessment policies.

CURRICULUM

Students enrolled in the concurrent BA/MA program are permitted to double-count 6 credits of coursework, thereby reducing the total amount of RLST coursework to $(36 + 30 - 6 =) 60$ credit hours. We propose that one of these

courses be RLST 6830 Intro to the Academic Study of Religion, which would replace Senior Seminar for BA/MA students, and that the other be in an area of depth concentration. Otherwise program students will fulfill all the normal requirements for the BA and the MA degree. We anticipate that many BA/MA students would opt for the coursework MA degree we are proposing, but believe that academically oriented students could with proper planning complete the thesis degree. The graduate school recommends a residency requirement for students in the concurrent degree program.

ESCAPE PLAN

Students who need to drop out will be required to fulfill the BA degree requirements for RLST and the department will apply graduate courses to undergraduate requirements on the advice of the advisor.

PROGRAM DEMAND

The expected student clientele for this degree program will include exceptional undergraduates who plan to pursue academic careers in the field of Religious Studies or related disciplines and students who wish to pursue more extensive study of religions than is permitted within the normal BA degree. It is expected that only a few students each year would avail themselves of this program and admission would be at the discretion of the faculty.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

It is up to us to recommend whether or not BA/MA students should be eligible for RA/TA opportunities and when they should become eligible. According to the graduate school, once students have been approved and admitted as graduate students they are eligible for appointments and fellowships as graduate students. In many programs they are excluded from such graduate appointments because they must take a higher load of courses than most graduate students in order to complete the degree on this accelerated schedule and because they are sometimes still taking undergraduate classes with students they might end up teaching as TAs. We recommend that BA/MA students be considered for graduate appointments only in exceptional circumstances but that they be considered for fellowship dollars once they reach graduate status.

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