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General Studies renamed Bachelor of Integrative Studies

By **Rebecca Wyatt Thomas**, OU Web Writer

Oakland University's general studies degree program has been renamed the **Bachelor of Integrative Studies (BIS)**. The name change provides a better representation of the goals of the program, which allows students to design personalized study programs using a cross-disciplinary approach. Students, faculty and staff can learn more about the BIS program during an open house on Tuesday, Jan. 15.

"Our students are nontraditional students with nontraditional academic interests," said Scott Crabill, director of the BIS program. "BIS students have very specific goals that cannot be met through other major on campus."

Crabill said students work with a professional adviser and faculty mentor to develop a plan of study that incorporates courses from across the curriculum. What develops is a course of study that meets the individual needs of students and allows them to follow the trends in the work place or societal needs, such as health classes mixed with business classes.

Created in 1975, the general studies program was intended to recruit nontraditional students transferring from community colleges. The students were given credit for their courses taken at other schools. For many years, there have been misconceptions about the general studies program and Crabill said the new name helps define it and also opens the conversation with future employers about what alumni studied at Oakland University.

"This degree is not just an unplanned compiling of courses, but a coherent course of study that includes classes from across the university to create a unique educational experience," Crabill said.

The name change was a recommendation made in 1999 after BGS underwent a comprehensive self-study. When Crabill came on board as the director, he began researching names for the program and working with the faculty council to get the new name in place.

"We're protecting the reputation of the Oakland University degree. The students work hard to put together and accomplish rigorous plans of study. What they do is not 'general' and we wanted the new name to recognize that," Crabill said.

The number of students enrolled in the Integrative Studies program has continued to rise over the years. Since fall 2000, 698 students have graduated from the program and 351 are currently enrolled. The students in the program have an average ACT composite score of 21.98, ranked third among the various academic units at the university.

After developing their unique academic plan, students are paired with faculty mentors who make sure the plans provide the best education. Advisers monitor the students' progress.

In recent years, the program has also made it easier for students to plan their courses through online forms, course substitution forms, major change forms and petition of exception forms. In the future, Crabill also hopes to implement online advising.

To learn more about the Bachelor of Integrative Studies, visit the **BIS** Web site or attend the informational open house on Tuesday, Jan. 15 from 4:30-6:30 p.m. in the Oakland Center Gold Room C. There will be food, refreshments and giveaways. For more information, call (248) 370-3229.

SUMMARY

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