

APPROVED BY SENATE  
03/04/2024



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**Proposal to the Senate Educational Policy Committee  
to Change the Status\* of an Existing Unit**

**\*Renaming and/or restructuring (mergers, separations, transfers)**

- 1. CURRENT UNIT NAME:** Division of General Studies
- 2. PROPOSED UNIT NAME** (if the proposal is for a restructure without a name change, please indicate this is not applicable):  
Division of Exploratory Studies
- 3. SPONSOR NAME AND EMAIL:**  
Sarah Watson, Director, Division of General Studies  
sdwatson@illinois.edu
- 4. COLLEGE CONTACT NAME AND EMAIL** (for units housed within a College):
- 5. TITLE OF PROPOSAL:** Rename the Division of General Studies as the Division of Exploratory Studies.
- 6. DESIRED EFFECTIVE DATE:** Fall 2025 or when fully approved
- 7. BRIEF DESCRIPTION:** The Division of General Studies, an administrative unit focused on providing academic advising and support to undeclared students, proposes a name change to the Division of Exploratory Studies to better reflect the mission and goals of the unit.  
  
Of note - initially there were plans to submit a companion proposal in the CIM-P system to also change the Undeclared major to Exploratory Studies, helping to distinguish this program from the variations of an undeclared option in the academic colleges. After student focus group feedback, the goal is now to maintain an Undeclared major in DES. No other change to the program structure is proposed; consistent with current practice, Undeclared students in DES students would continue to be required to transfer to a degree-granting major in an academic college by their 5<sup>th</sup> semester of enrollment.
- 8. JUSTIFICATION:**  
What influenced the decision to rename/restructure the unit?  
  
Based on feedback from high school guidance counselor advisory groups, OUA has suggested DGS consider re-naming and re-branding to better capture the interest and understanding of students truly exploring majors across a variety of disciplines. This is

consistent with the feedback received from current and prospective DGS students and families and is supported by our academic counterparts as well.

As noted above, the expanded use of the “undeclared” major has complicated the options for students who have not yet committed to a specific major. While DGS – Undeclared was the only option for undecided or exploring students when the unit was originally established, applicants now have the following related options when applying for admissions:

- ACES Undeclared
- Art Undeclared
- Business Undeclared
- General Studies Undeclared
- Engineering Undeclared
- LAS Undeclared

The college-based undeclared options do allow students to narrow their focus, but these distinctions can be difficult to navigate especially for those who are not familiar with the college and major structure. In fact, high school guidance counselors, Office of Undergraduate Admissions (OUA) staff, and academic advisors across campus have voiced confusion when helping exploring students navigate the undergraduate application. Moving from General Studies to Exploratory Studies aims to better distinguish for students why they might select our unit’s undeclared option over those housed in the colleges. Exploratory Studies signals more clearly the mission and vision of our unit which includes providing highly trained and holistic major and career advising for students who need to time to explore their options before eventually choosing an academic program from a broad range of interests.

In an effort to investigate further and gather additional insights about re-naming the unit and major, six student focus groups were conducted in November and December 2023. In total, the groups included 52 current and former DGS students as well as 5 trained OUA student ambassadors (or I-STARS). The majority of students also felt that the combination of Exploratory Studies in the unit name together with ‘undeclared’ as the major name helped to meet the needs of a diverse student population that includes a) students who identify as exploring and applied directly to DGS as well as b) students who identify with a specific major/career pathway (like Engineering or Business) and were admitted to the program as a second choice or as a redirect. Among their comments, students shared that:

- a. “Division of Exploratory Studies implies that you’re actively working toward something.”
- b. “DES appeals to me more and my parents would think so too.”
- c. “DES is more positive especially when talking to our parents for support.”
- d. “DES makes it more clear.”
- e. “Exploratory Studies shows a pathway and a goal.”
- f. DES is “more optimistic.”
- g. “Exploratory Studies describes what we are doing right now better. I am taking much more than gen eds and I think it’s important to call it Exploratory Studies.”

- h. “I like Exploratory Studies. You have a lot of options. With undeclared you don’t know what this means or what DGS means. I had to look at the DGS description to better understand before I applied.”
- i. “I like DES undeclared. DGS sounds like you’re just doing gen eds first.”
- j. Division of General Studies “gives the impression that students have a lack of commitment, drive or interest.”

As referenced above, there has long been misconception that students in General Studies simply take general education courses and that falls short of representing the unit’s vision to support students with degree progress while they engage in strategic major and career exploration. In addition, General Studies is frequently incorrectly perceived as a degree-granting option at UIUC (like the Bachelor of Liberal Studies option that will soon be introduced in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences).

It is important to note that other institutions like Purdue University, Indiana University, the Ohio State University and the University of Tennessee among others also use the “exploratory” nomenclature to identify their units for undecided and exploring students.

<b>University</b>	<b>Program Name</b>
Indiana University	Exploratory Studies
Michigan State University	Exploratory Preference
University of Minnesota	Center for Academic Planning & Exploration
University of Nebraska-Lincoln	Explore Center
Ohio State University	University Exploration
Purdue University	Exploratory Studies
Oregon State University	University Exploratory Studies Program
University of Tennessee -Knoxville	University Exploratory Students
Millikin University	Exploratory Studies
University of Kentucky	Exploratory Studies
Miami University	Office of Exploratory Studies
NC State University	Exploratory Studies
Butler University	Exploratory Studies

**9. BUDGETARY, FACULTY, STAFF, AND STUDENT IMPLICATIONS:**

- A. Increase (or decrease) in faculty, staff, GTAs, etc., and dollars needed, if any. N/A
- B. Internal reallocations (e.g. change in class size, teaching loads, student-faculty ratio). N/A
- C. Effects on course enrollment in other units and explanations of discussions with representatives of those units (include communication in addendum). The change is not expected to impact the overall enrollment of the unit. There is no intention to increase or decrease enrollment goals for the unit.
- D. Advising impact on students, if any. High school counselors, Office of Undergraduate Admissions counselors and incoming students and their families will need to be aware of the change and be advised to select the appropriate major based on their interest.
- E. Impact on physical teaching spaces, labs, equipment, etc. N/A
- F. Impact on budget line restructuring, Org/program codes retained/retired, etc. College KW and Org 736 will be renamed Division of Exploratory Studies and sub-orgs 248 and 605

will be renamed as DES Administration and DES Courses respectively. The Banner Course Subject will change from GS to EXPS.

G. Impact on University Library. N/A

**10. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS:**

- A. Changes to administration, staff, and faculty reporting, office space, etc. N/A
- B. Will there be changes or edits to the bylaws? N/A
- C. Describe restructuring of the Promotion and Tenure Committee, if applicable? N/A
- D. Will a Transition Committee be used during the rename/restructure? N/A
- E. Other?

**11. ANY PREVIOUS RENAMING OR RESTRUCTURING OF THIS UNIT?** (If yes, please describe the restructure and when it took place.): None since its establishment in 2007.

**12. SUMMARY OF ACTIONS:**

- A. Established in 2007, the Campus Center for Advising and Academic Services (CCAAS) evolved as part of the campus strategic plan to strengthen “essential academic services, such as access to advising and mentoring.” With the Center’s creation, undeclared students, along with some of the related advising operations, were moved from the General Curriculum unit in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS) to the CCAAS allowing LAS to focus advising efforts on students interested in LAS curricula. Within CCAAS, the Division of General Studies (DGS), an administrative unit, was established to provide the student academic services traditionally provided by the academic college for first and second-year undeclared students. Specifically, DGS was and is responsible for all aspects of the student academic experience including recruiting and admissions, new student registration, academic advising and major selection, programmatic offerings including honors, enrichment experiences, academic support and success, as well as a small set of non-academic courses offered under the GS rubric.

Mission

The Division of General Studies (DGS) assists undeclared students with the process of exploring and declaring majors at the University of Illinois by providing holistic, developmental academic advising. DGS offers students the ability to connect with academic advisors who are committed to their success.

The Division of General Studies helps students:

- Clarify their academic, personal, and career goals;
- Identify their strengths, skills, interests, and values;
- Understand the process of exploring majors at Illinois;
- Identify the programs of study available at Illinois;
- Understand specific programmatic and degree requirements;
- Understand the Intercollegiate Transfer (ICT) process at Illinois;
- Recognize the significance of and their responsibility in the academic advising relationship;
- Learn about and connect with appropriate campus resources and services;

- Learn about the educational opportunities available at the University of Illinois including undergraduate research, study abroad, tutoring, leadership development, involvement in student organizations, volunteer experiences, and connections with faculty.

It is important to note that while DGS is coded as an academic college in Banner, it is an administrative unit. The unit has no faculty, it offers no disciplinary majors, credentials, or degrees and it only offers a modest series of first-year experience/orientation and seminar courses to its students. The unit is coded in Banner as an academic college to facilitate the enrollment of students and to drive designations on the academic transcript (see attached). In Banner and on the academic transcript, all students have a college and major listed for each term they are enrolled. Assigning DGS as an academic college in Banner allows students to see DGS as their college just as any other student would see AHS, LAS or Media as examples.

The proposal to re-name the unit was initiated in Fall 2023, responsive to OUA feedback, and shared with the Council of Undergraduate Deans (letters of support attached). As indicated above, student focus groups were also conducted throughout Fall 2023.

- B. Proposed timeline to complete the rename/restructure of the unit. Ideally, the name change would be in place for the start of the Fall 2025 semester to then allow the unit to begin using the name on websites and formal communication with students and campus stakeholders.
- C. Public hearing minutes to be attached to the end of the proposal.

**13. GOVERNANCE PROCESS:** (List the governance levels supporting this proposal in the unit and/or College and the votes taken at each level (see [Statues, Article VIII, Section IV](#) and [Senate Bylaws, Part D., Section 8. C](#))::

As a non-degree granting administrative unit reporting to the Office of the Provost, the proposal was shared with and endorsed by the Council of Undergraduate Deans on 11/2/23. The Office of Undergraduate Admissions has advised on the proposal and provided feedback regarding processing and the potential impact on the recruiting process.

**14. ADDENDUM** (List all addenda for this proposal that will be attached, e.g. public hearing announcements and meeting minutes, FAQ public document, University Library Impact Letter, letters of support, new bylaws, other written communication, etc.):

Letters of support:

- Vice Provost, Kevin Jackson
- Office of Undergraduate Admissions, Doug Burgett, Interim Director
- College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, Stephen Downie, Associate Dean
- College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, Bob Steltman, Executive Assistant Dean
- College of Media, Katie Clark, Associate Dean for Student Services

- College of Fine and Applied Arts, Zelda Gardner, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Affairs
- College of Social Work, Carol Wilson-Smith, BSW Program Director
- College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, Anna Ball, Associate Dean for Academic Programs
- College of Applied Health Sciences, Dustin Tarter, Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Recruitment, Advising & Enrichment
- College of Education, Sarah McCarthey, Interim Associate Dean of Undergraduate Programs
- School of Information Sciences, Eugene Moore, Interim Assistant Dean for Student Affairs
- Grainger College of Engineering, Jonathan Makela, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs
- Gies College of Business, Nehemiah Scott, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Programs

Sample DGS transcript

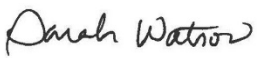
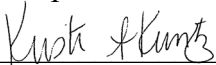

**15. STATEMENT FOR THE ACADEMIC CATALOG** (If there is text in the Academic Catalog, <http://catalog.illinois.edu/>, that will need to be updated as a result of this request, please list the URL(s) of the page(s) and the text to update.):

<http://catalog.illinois.edu/schools/general-studies/>

Changes to the academic catalog will also involve the creation of a distinct entry for the Exploratory Studies major on the Undergraduate Majors & Concentrations page (<http://catalog.illinois.edu/undergraduate/#G>).

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**CAMPUS WORKFLOW NOTIFICATION**

	<u>2/7/24</u>
Unit Representative Name and Signature	Date
	<u>2/7/24</u>
College Representative Name and Signature	Date
_____ Graduate College Representative Name and Signature*	_____ Date
	<u>2/21/2024</u>
Provost Representative	Date
_____ Educational Policy Committee Representative	_____ Date

\*if the unit houses or will house graduate programs.

February 5, 2024

***Sent via Email***

Senate Committee on Educational Policy  
c/o Office of the Senate  
608 S Wright St., MC 461  
Urbana, IL 61801

Dear Educational Policy Committee,

I write this letter to support the proposal to revise the name of the Division of General Studies (DGS) to the Division of Exploratory Studies (DES). From my vantage point as Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, I wish to amplify two ideas noted in the submitted proposal. Specifically, the name change clarifies to prospective students that “exploring” is a valid and productive pursuit for any incoming student, and the name change clarifies the unit’s purpose to its advisors and stakeholders across our campus.

As a university that directly admits students into colleges, the application process can be stressful for the number of prospective students who have yet to embrace a direction of study. Unfortunately, the current “Division of General Studies” name does not allay the stress of those who have not yet decided. This is another example of how our choice of words does not prioritize the student. Changing the name to emphasize the exploratory nature of the unit promotes inclusion by signaling to undecided students that they have a home at the University of Illinois.

The newly named Division of Exploratory Studies also brings clarity and focus to the ways in which the unit supports its students, but also presents DES as a resource for other colleges seeking to serve their students. Although the unit has historically offered support to guide students towards areas of study in which they might ultimately major, the unit has been pulled away from that focus. The divergence is not deliberate, but a natural consequence of the ill-defined perceptions of the unit held by those throughout campus who serve students. Adopting a more descriptive name for the unit offers an opportunity to reset campus perceptions and allow the unit to more fully realize its potential as a resource to all academic colleges, especially as many colleges introduce “undeclared” as choice of major.

The leadership of the current Division of General Studies has not taken lightly the prospect of changing its name. They have held conversations with students, the admissions team, and the Council of Undergraduate Deans to obtain feedback and explore options. I am more than satisfied



with the inclusive approach undertaken to arrive at the proposed change to Division of Exploratory Studies. My hope is that the change can move forward in a timely manner such that all prospective students to see a place for them to begin their studies of the University of Illinois as soon as possible.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin E. Jackson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Kevin E. Jackson  
Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education

**From:** [Burgett, Douglas James](#)  
**To:** [Watson, Sarah](#)  
**Subject:** Proposal Support: Renaming Division of General Studies to Division of Exploratory Studies  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 7, 2024 1:15:51 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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Sarah,

The Office of Undergraduate Admissions and the Office of Communications for Enrollment Management endorse the proposal to rename the Division of General Studies to the Division of Exploratory Studies.

This change is expected to enhance clarity for students, staff, and counselors. The term "General" is perceived as too vague, lacking a clear connection with its audience. We believe that students will not only readily understand the term "Exploratory" but also appreciate engaging with a unit/program that promotes exploration.

Additionally, we advocate retaining the program title "Undeclared" as it provides further clarification regarding the purpose of Exploratory Studies for students. As outlined in the proposal, our objective is to prevent any misconceptions that this is a degree-awarding program.

Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any inquiries or require additional information regarding our support for this proposal.

-Doug

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**DOUG BURGETT**

*Interim Director of Undergraduate Admissions  
Director of Marketing and Communications*

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Enrollment Management  
Admissions & Records  
901 W. Illinois St. | M/C 061  
Urbana, IL 61801  
217-333-9789 | [dburgett@illinois.edu](mailto:dburgett@illinois.edu)



*Under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act any written communication to or from university employees regarding university business is a public record and may be subject to public disclosure.*

**From:** Downie, Stephen R <[sdownie@illinois.edu](mailto:sdownie@illinois.edu)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 15, 2024 4:38 PM  
**To:** Miller, Nolan H <[nmiller@illinois.edu](mailto:nmiller@illinois.edu)>  
**Subject:** DGS to DES proposal

February 15, 2024

Dear Nolan,

I have now met with both Dana Rabin (Acting Associate Dean for Student Academic Affairs) and Dean Venetria Patton to discuss the proposal for the renaming of the Division of General Studies to the Division of Exploratory Studies. On behalf of LAS, both unequivocally support this renaming, as do I.

Cheers,

Stephen

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**STEPHEN R. DOWNIE**

*Associate Dean for Curricula and Academic Policy*

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences  
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign  
2090 Lincoln Hall  
702 S Wright St | M/C 448  
Urbana, IL 61801  
217.333.1350 | [sdownie@illinois.edu](mailto:sdownie@illinois.edu)  
[sib.illinois.edu/profile/sdownie](http://sib.illinois.edu/profile/sdownie)



*Under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act any written communication to or from university employees regarding university business is a public record and may be subject to public disclosure.*

**From:** Steltman, Robert Charles <steltman@illinois.edu>

**Sent:** Thursday, February 1, 2024 3:51 PM

**To:** Watson, Sarah <sdwatson@illinois.edu>; Rabin, Dana <drabin@illinois.edu>; Valentin, Kristy M <kvalentn@illinois.edu>

**Subject:** RE: DGS Rename - letter of support

Hello, Sarah:

The Student Academic Affairs Office of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences supports the Division of General Studies Proposal to change their name to the Division of Exploratory Studies. As more Colleges, including LAS, expand their undeclared options to better serve our students, such a mission-clarifying name change will help prospective students, parents and guidance counselors better understand their full range of options, which can only assist all University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign units in our collective academic enterprise. It also provides continuing students in the newly rechristened Division of Exploratory Studies a unique identity and sense of purpose.

Best,

Bob Steltman  
Executive Assistant Dean, Student Academic Affairs  
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences



UNIVERSITY OF  
**ILLINOIS**  
URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

**College of Media**

Student Services Center  
18 Gregory Hall, MC-477  
810 S. Wright St.  
Urbana, IL 61801

November 1, 2023

To: Sarah Watson, Director, Division of General Studies  
From: Katie Clark, Associate Dean for Student Services, College of Media

RE: Renaming the Division of General Studies

Dear Sarah,

On behalf of the College of Media, I write to express support for the proposal for the Division of General Studies to undergo a name change to the Division of Exploratory Studies.

The name better aligns with the great work being done by the unit as they help students explore their interests and how they align with majors on campus. The Division of Exploratory Studies will also signal to incoming students that the goal of the unit is exploration and finding the best fit. It clarifies the goals and actions of the unit for those across campus as well as those seeking to apply to the University of Illinois.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katie Clark".

Katie Clark  
Associate Dean for Student Services  
College of Media



**COLLEGE OF FINE & APPLIED ARTS**

Office of Undergraduate Academic Affairs  
110 Architecture Building, MC-622  
608 East Lorado Taft Drive  
Champaign, IL 61820

November 28, 2023

To: Sarah Watson, Division of General Studies

From: Zelda Gardner, FAA Academic Affairs

RE: Division of General Studies Proposal to Change Name

Dear Sarah,

On behalf of the College of Fine & Applied Arts Office of Undergraduate Affairs, I write to express support for the proposal to change the name of Division of General Studies to the Division of Exploratory Studies.

The Division of General Studies (DGS) has provided many of our current FAA students with the opportunity to learn about our programs and explore their interests further before officially declaring a major. In fact, some of our programs heavily rely on the Division of General Studies each year for Intercollegiate Transfer applicants. We have found that many incoming students do not have a chance to take FAA related classes during high school, as they often serve as electives. A good deal of students have a limited understanding of our programs and the related career opportunities. Some may harbor some apprehension about pursuing degrees in the arts. The exploratory process that our students undertake as a student in DGS, often provides them with the knowledge, experience, and support that they need to confidently declare a major in the College of Fine & Applied Arts. For this reason, the Division of Exploratory Studies, seems to be a more fitting name for the experience that we seek for our students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Zelda Gardner', written in a cursive style.

Zelda Gardner  
Associate Dean of Undergraduate Affairs  
College of Fine & Applied Arts



UNIVERSITY OF  
**ILLINOIS**  
URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

**School of Social Work**

1010 W. Nevada Drive, MC-082  
Urbana, IL 61801-3813

November 2, 2023

To: Sarah Watson, Director, Division of General Studies

From: Carol Wilson-Smith, School of Social Work

RE: Proposed Unit Name Change

Dear Sarah,

On behalf of the School of Social Work, I write to express enthusiastic support for the proposal to rename the Division of General Studies to the Division of Exploratory Studies. This proposal supports your mission and goals of providing advising, mentoring, and support to undergraduate students as they explore the many academic opportunities available on our campus. In addition, a name change to the Division of Exploratory Studies aligns well with peer institutions, such as the Ohio State University and Purdue University, to identify your unit as a space for students exploring and undecided on their major.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carol Wilson-Smith".

Carol Wilson-Smith, LCSW  
BSW Program Director  
Clinical Professor



## College of ACES

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

### Office of Academic Programs

123 Mumford Hall, 1301 W. Gregory Drive | Urbana, IL 61801  
217-333-3380

November 3, 2023

To Whom it May Concern:

The College of ACES officially supports the name change of the Division of General Studies to the Division of Exploratory Studies.

Sincerely,

**ANNA BALL**

*Associate Dean for Academic Programs*



**From:** Tarter, Dustin O <dtarter@illinois.edu>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 25, 2023 12:11 PM  
**To:** Watson, Sarah <sdwatson@illinois.edu>  
**Cc:** Santos, Carla A <csantos@illinois.edu>  
**Subject:** RE: Request for Letters of Support - Division of Exploratory Studies

Dear Sarah,

The College of Applied Health Sciences supports the proposal to rename the Division of General Studies to the Division of Exploratory Studies and to alter the undergraduate program code title in the Division from Undeclared to Exploratory Studies. The College believes that these changes are in the best interests of prospective and current undergraduate students and their families as well as the faculty and staff that support these students.

Sincerely,  
Dustin

**Dustin Tarter**

Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Recruitment, Advising and Enrichment

College of Applied Health Sciences  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
116 Huff Hall  
1206 S. Fourth St. | M/C 586  
Champaign, IL 61820  
217-333-1741 | [dtarter@illinois.edu](mailto:dtarter@illinois.edu)  
[www.ahs.illinois.edu](http://www.ahs.illinois.edu)

**From:** McCarthy, Sarah Jane <mccarthe@illinois.edu>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, November 8, 2023 4:04 PM  
**To:** Watson, Sarah <sdwatson@illinois.edu>  
**Subject:** Re: Request for Letters of Support - Division of Exploratory Studies

Sarah,

I support the name change to Division of Exploratory Studies.

Sarah J. McCarthy  
Sheila M. Miller Professor of Education  
Interim Associate Dean of Undergraduate Programs  
College of Education  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
1310 S Sixth Street  
Champaign, IL 61820  
(217) 244 1149  
[mccarthe@illinois.edu](mailto:mccarthe@illinois.edu)

**From:** Moore, Eugene L <emoore@illinois.edu>  
**Sent:** Monday, November 20, 2023 10:53 AM  
**To:** Watson, Sarah <sdwatson@illinois.edu>  
**Cc:** Blake, Catherine Lesley <clblake@illinois.edu>; Carter, April Latriece <acart22@illinois.edu>  
**Subject:** Re: Request for Letters of Support - Division of Exploratory Studies

Hello Sarah, my apologies for the delayed response. The School of Information Sciences – iSchool supports the proposal of changing the name of the Division of General Studies – DGS to the Division of Exploratory Studies – DES. As presented in the proposal the name change will help prospective and current students truly understand the exploratory nature of the unit. Such a change aligns with the university mission and other intuitions of higher education.

Respectfully,

*Dr. Moore*

**Eugene L. Moore, Ph.D., MBA (he/him/his)**

*Assistant Dean for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility – DEIA*

*Interim Assistant Dean for Student Affairs*

**School of Information Sciences – iSchool**

**University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign**

121 Information Sciences Building | MC-493

Champaign, Illinois 61820

[emoore@illinois.edu](mailto:emoore@illinois.edu) | [www.ischool.illinois.edu](http://www.ischool.illinois.edu)

Voice: 217-333-3280 | Fax: 217-244-3302

**From:** Makela, Jonathan <jmakela@illinois.edu>

**Sent:** Tuesday, October 31, 2023 5:16 PM

**To:** Watson, Sarah <sdwatson@illinois.edu>

**Subject:** Re: Request for Letters of Support - Division of Exploratory Studies

Dear Sarah,

I am writing to express support for the proposed change of name of the “Division of General Studies” to the “Division of Exploratory Studies” and from the “Undeclared” major to an “Exploratory Studies” major. I believe this better represents the goals of this program and separates the “Undeclared” program from the various “Undeclared” programs housed in different colleges.

Regards,  
Jonathan

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**JONATHAN J. MAKELA**

Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs, The Grainger College of Engineering  
Abel Bliss Professor of Engineering, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering  
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

206 Engineering Hall  
1308 W. Green St.  
Urbana, IL 61801  
Phone: (217) 333-2280  
Fax: (217) 244-4974

**From:** Scott, Nehemiah <[nehemiah@illinois.edu](mailto:nehemiah@illinois.edu)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, November 15, 2023 6:00 AM  
**To:** Watson, Sarah <[sdwatson@illinois.edu](mailto:sdwatson@illinois.edu)>  
**Subject:** Re: Request for Letters of Support - Division of Exploratory Studies

Hi Sarah,

My apology for the late reply here. My wife recently gave birth to our son in the last couple of weeks, and so I have been away from email a bit more than usual!

To answer your questions, I do not mind at all providing a letter of support for this. In addition, Gies does not have any concerns about the name change. I have checked this with our Dean and Executive Associate Dean.

Is there still time to submit a letter of support for the name change? If so, let me know if there is any type of template I should/can use to provide a brief letter.

Thanks,

Nehemiah

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**NEHEMIAH SCOTT, PH.D.**

*Associate Dean of Undergraduate Programs* | Office of Undergraduate Programs  
*Teaching Assistant Professor* | Department of Business Administration

*Josef and Margot Lakonishok Faculty Fellow*

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA - CHAMPAIGN

Urbana, Illinois 61801

WWW.REGISTRAR.ILLINOIS.EDU

Student Name:

University ID:

Issue Date: 07 - Feb - 24

Level: Undergrad - Urbana-Champaign

Day - Month of Birth: 03 - Nov

Most Recent Program(s)

College : Division of General Studies

Major : Undeclared

SUBJ NO. COURSE TITLE CRED GRD PTS R

INSTITUTION CREDIT:

Summer 2023 - Urbana-Champaign

Division of General Studies

Undeclared

RST 100 RST in Modern Society 3.00
RST 118 Student-Athlete Transition 3.00
Ehrs: 6.00 GPA-Hrs: 6.00 Qpts: 23.01 GPA:

Fall 2023 - Urbana-Champaign

Division of General Studies

Undeclared

CHLH 243 Drug Use and Misuse 2.00
ECON 102 Microeconomic Principles 3.00
FSHN 120 Contemporary Nutrition 3.00
GLBL 100 Intro to Global Studies 3.00
GS 101 Exploring General Studies 1.00
STAT 100 Statistics 3.00
Ehrs: 15.00 GPA-Hrs: 15.00 Qpts: 54.01 GPA:

Spring 2024 - Urbana-Champaign

IN PROGRESS WORK

ACE 251 The World Food Economy 3.00 IN PROGRESS
CHLM 260 Introduction to Medical Ethics 3.00 IN PROGRESS
ECON 103 Microeconomic Principles 3.00 IN PROGRESS
LEAD 140 Interpersonal Intelligence 2.00 IN PROGRESS
RHET 105 Writing and Research 4.00 IN PROGRESS

In Progress Credits 15.00

Table with transcript totals: Earned Hrs, GPA Hrs, Points, GPA. Includes rows for TOTAL INSTITUTION, TOTAL TRANSFER, and OVERALL.

\*\*\*\*\* END OF TRANSCRIPT \*\*\*\*\*

**From:** [Lehman, Barbara J](#)  
**To:** [Lehman, Barbara J](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Illinois Faculty/Staff Notices - 2/18/2024  
**Date:** Thursday, February 22, 2024 7:14:36 AM  
**Attachments:** [image004.png](#)  
[image005.png](#)

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**From:** Watson, Sarah <[sdwatson@illinois.edu](mailto:sdwatson@illinois.edu)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 21, 2024 3:36 PM  
**To:** Miller, Nolan H <[nmiller@illinois.edu](mailto:nmiller@illinois.edu)>  
**Cc:** Kuntz, Kristi A <[kakuntz@illinois.edu](mailto:kakuntz@illinois.edu)>; Newell, Brooke <[bsnewell@illinois.edu](mailto:bsnewell@illinois.edu)>; Lehman, Barbara J <[bjlehman@illinois.edu](mailto:bjlehman@illinois.edu)>  
**Subject:** RE: Illinois Faculty/Staff Notices - 2/18/2024

Hi Nolan,

Here's a response to the question you posed ["Please give additional information on the preferences expressed by the student focus groups, including the reactions of students who did not prefer DES to DGS"]. Please let me know if you need anything else. Thanks again.

Sarah

In the initial exercise of our student focus groups, participants were presented with two options – Division of General Studies (Major: Undeclared) and Division of Exploratory Studies (Major: Exploratory Studies) and asked to free associate, writing down the first words that came to mind for each option. Overwhelmingly there were positive responses to DES: Exploratory Studies and negative associations with DGS: Undeclared. As we unpacked responses further and asked students to explain their position, surprisingly, many of the focus groups organically came to the recommendation that we pair the unit name DES with the major name Undeclared. Students indicated that 'undeclared' is a more universal way of describing the program thus, even if the major was called Exploratory Studies, they would still identify as 'undeclared'. They also indicated that the unit name DES with an Exploratory Studies major seemed redundant. For the unit name, however, students preferred Exploratory over General because it seemed to suggest a more strategic and purposeful path versus simply taking gen eds. In fact, we observed that a number of student participants from underrepresented backgrounds and/or identifying as first generation college students indicated that their families had reservations about their choice to attend UIUC in the Division of General Studies and felt that Exploratory Studies would have been a preferred and more acceptable option to their families. Also of note, participants in our final focus group were all trained admissions ambassadors (or ISTARs) who work for the Office of Admissions. This group of students, who work frequently with prospective and admitted families, voted unanimously for Exploratory Studies over General Studies signaling they felt it would be a much preferred choice for the students and families with whom they

work.

In all of the focus group sessions, there were very few students who signaled preference for General Studies over Exploratory and those who did tended to be students who indicated they “already knew” what they wanted to pursue i.e. students pursuing admission to competitive programs like Gies Business. These students generally felt that maintaining undeclared with DES was a healthy compromise and met the needs of both audiences – those who identify as exploring (with DES) and those who don’t (with undeclared). Ironically, this illustrates one of the central goals in re-naming our unit. Given the competitive nature of many UIUC majors, the ideal admit to DGS who will benefit the most from the services we offer and the advising approach we take is the truly exploring student who is interested in and open to exploring multiple major options at UIUC. The name change should amplify that message for prospective and admitted students and help us ensure a right fit for those who choose to join the program.

**SARAH WATSON**

*Director, Division of General Studies*

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

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**From:** [Tarter, Dustin O](#)  
**To:** [Watson, Sarah](#)  
**Cc:** [Santos, Carla A](#)  
**Subject:** Letter of Support - Transition to Division of Exploratory Studies  
**Date:** Monday, February 26, 2024 3:04:16 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[image002.png](#)  
[image003.png](#)  
[image004.png](#)  
[image005.png](#)

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Dear Sarah,

The College of Applied Health Sciences supports the proposal to rename the Division of General Studies to the Division of Exploratory Studies. The College believes this change is in the best interests of prospective and current undergraduate students and their families as well as the faculty and staff that support these students.

Sincerely,  
Dustin

**Dustin Tarter**  
Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Recruitment, Advising and Enrichment

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University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
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**From:** [Makela, Jonathan](#)  
**To:** [Watson, Sarah](#)  
**Subject:** Re: request for addendum  
**Date:** Monday, February 26, 2024 4:37:05 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[image002.png](#)  
[image003.png](#)

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Dear Sarah

Thank you for the update on the status of the proposal, including the decision to maintain the “undeclared” major within the proposed Division of Exploratory Studies. I am writing to express support for this proposal.

Regards,  
Jonathan

---

**JONATHAN J. MAKELA**

Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs, The Grainger College of Engineering  
Abel Bliss Professor of Engineering, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering  
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

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**From:** Watson, Sarah <sdwatson@illinois.edu>  
**Date:** Monday, February 26, 2024 at 2:05 PM  
**To:** Makela, Jonathan <jmakela@illinois.edu>  
**Subject:** request for addendum

Hi Jonathan,

Hope you're doing well! I'm just returning from an EPC meeting in which the DGS name change proposal was discussed. Since the proposal was first drafted and shared in early fall term 2023, we gathered student focus group feedback and amended the proposal to still change DGS to DES but maintain undeclared as the major (rather than re-name the major Exploratory Studies). It was mentioned today that your letter (and one other) was written prior to then and an update, confirming that Grainger supports the revised proposal, was requested. If you're in support of the update above, would you be willing to draft a quick email to note that? I have attached the revised

proposal and your first letter, for reference. This is headed to Senate one week from today so I believe I'd need to forward your email by end of day tomorrow if possible so that it can be included.

Thanks for considering!

Sarah

**SARAH WATSON**

*Director, Division of General Studies*

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

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# EWEEK

## NOTICES FOR FACULTY AND STAFF AT ILLINOIS

If you will need disability-related accommodations in order to participate, please email the contact person for the event. Early requests are strongly encouraged to allow sufficient time to meet your access needs.

Announcements for the week of February 18, 2024

### EVENTS

#### Public Hearing on Proposed Renaming of the Division of General Studies

The Senate Committee on Educational Policy will hold a public hearing to discuss the proposed renaming of the Division of General Studies to the Division of Exploratory Studies. Interested parties should notify Barb Lehman via email ([bjlehman@illinois.edu](mailto:bjlehman@illinois.edu)) if they plan on attending.

February 26, 1:30 PM • 232 English Building

[Nolan Miller](#) • Senate Committee on Educational Policy



The Next 150 is the university's five-year strategic plan designed to lay a foundation for generations.

See the full text of the plan at [strategicplan.illinois.edu](http://strategicplan.illinois.edu).

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In accordance with Senate *Bylaws* Part D.8.c.4, the Senate Committee on Education Policy (EP) must hold a public hearing and collect written comments as part of its review of proposals to change the status of an academic unit. EP provided notice in the February 17, 2024 edition of the weekly campus electronic bulletin Eweek (Eweek policy only allows one posting) that a public hearing would be held on February 26, 2024 for the following proposal. Minutes from the public hearing are included.

**EP.24.071, Rename the Division of General Studies to Division of Exploratory Studies**

EP held an open hearing regarding the proposal on February 26, 2024 during its regular meeting. An email was sent to all current senators advising them of the public hearing and asking for written comments by February 20, 2024, and Chair Miller requested the hearing information also be conveyed to the Council of Undergraduate Deans.

EP received one written comment from a senator and the relevant part is as follows.

The shift in nomenclature may inadvertently discourage students from making decisive choices about their majors, potentially hindering their long-term growth and preparedness for the job market. Early decisions regarding areas of study are crucial for students to adequately prepare for their future careers. By delaying these decisions or perpetuating indecision, we risk undermining the long-term benefits that come from early academic focus.

In light of these concerns, I advocate for a different approach. Rather than expanding DGS, I propose downsizing it in order to encourage students to make informed decisions about their academic paths at an earlier stage. This approach aligns more closely with the goal of fostering students' long-term growth and success.

No guest attended the public hearing, and it opened and closed without comment. EP then proceeded to discuss the proposal with the sponsors.

The sponsors addressed the written comment during the discussion with EP, noting that students in the Division of General Studies (DGS) receive extensive advising and must transfer into a major after four semesters. The name change is not expected to affect this constraint.

During the discussion of the proposal at its meetings on February 12, and February 26, 2024, EP members expressed a desire to learn more about DGS, its mission, and students' experiences. Since this is not directly related to the name change, proposal sponsors agreed to attend a future EP meeting to provide EP with a more general presentation about DGS.

Prepared by: Nolan Miller, Chair, Senate Committee on Educational Policy