

University of Oregon  
Proposed Major in Native American and Indigenous Studies  
Summary Document

**a. A brief description of the anticipated program**

We propose to offer a major/BA/BS degree in Native American and Indigenous Studies (NAIS) at the University of Oregon. NAIS is an interdisciplinary field that uses approaches from history, philosophy, anthropology, literature, law, political science, ethnic/gender/sexuality studies, environmental studies, and other disciplines to understand contemporary Native American and Indigenous identities, practices, histories, cultures, and political statuses in context from the earliest times until the present. We currently offer a minor in Native American Studies (NAS), governed independently by the Native American Studies advisory committee and organizationally housed in the Department of Indigenous, Race, and Ethnic Studies (IRES) within the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS). The major would continue with this structure in relationship to IRES and CAS. We add the term Indigenous to the program title (Native American and Indigenous Studies) to signal our expanded attention to Indigeneity outside of the contiguous 48 states, while also maintaining our commitments to the local and regional contexts of Kalalpuya ilih, the state of Oregon, and the Pacific Northwest.

Developed in consultation with Native faculty, staff, students, alumni, community members, and tribal education delegates, the NAIS major is structured into two tracks. The **interdisciplinary track** requires 56 credits, at least 28 in residence and at least 36 at the upper division. Required core coursework includes an introductory survey of NAIS taken in the first year in the major, one year of Indigenous language instruction (fulfilled at UO or another accredited institution/tribal community), and four upper division courses that include a research methodologies course taken in junior year and a faculty-supervised practicum in collaboration with tribal partners taken in senior year. Students are also required to fulfill distribution requirements across three areas: Culture, Language, and Education; Law, Policy, Governance, and History; and Literature, Media, and the Arts. The **language track** requires 56 credits, at least 28 in residence and at least 28 at the upper division. Core coursework and distribution requirements are the same as the interdisciplinary track except for the addition of a 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Indigenous language instruction.

Interdisciplinary coursework in the NAIS major provides students with key background in tribal history, sovereignty, government-to-government relations between tribal nations and state/federal governments, the importance of treaties and federal trust responsibilities, the value of Indigenous knowledge systems, and the dynamics of contemporary Native life. The NAIS major will build a better government-to-government relationship between the State of Oregon and the nine federally recognized tribes through visibility and service; by training future employees of the tribes about broader issues, challenges, and opportunities facing their communities; and by equipping non-Native citizens and government employees with crucial knowledge to go into the world as responsible citizens. Armed with this training, all NAIS graduates leave the UO prepared to embark on a diversity of career paths including tribal political leadership, education and administration, higher education, social services and social work, Native language instruction, environmental policy, natural and cultural resources management, law, tribal cultural heritage preservation, the arts, journalism and new media, and community/economic development.

**b. Program location and modality (face to face, online, and/or hybrid)**

The independently-governed program will be institutionally housed in the Department of Indigenous, Race, and Ethnic Studies (IRES) within the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS). Its primary modality will be in-person advising and instruction on the UO Main Campus. We also anticipate developing an increasing online curricular presence in both summer and conventional academic year instruction.

**c. Anticipated start date**

September 2021 or September 2022 (at the latest)

**d. Anticipated enrollment, at launch and goals for 5 and 10 years out (provide anticipated headcount for Fall term at launch, 5 years and 10 years).**

The NAS minor currently carries between 25-40 students annually, the majority of whom (33/40 or 82.5%, currently) are Native American or Indigenous, a demographic representing ~30% of AI/AN students enrolled at the UO (n=113, 2020). The NAS program has strong relationships with the Native American Student Union, a consistent influx of students from the Native American and Indigenous Studies ARC, and a strong presence in the state and regionally through the Native American Recruitment Specialist in Admissions. According to recent survey results among current and former UO Native students conducted in the summer and fall of 2019, and informal discussions among current Native and/or NAS students, an overwhelming majority note a desire for a NAIS undergraduate major if it was/is available. Combined with consistent NAS course demand/enrollments (Ex: avg. 95% capacity across 8 NAS courses serving over 480 students in winter 2021) and the early success (10 students) and steady growth of our NAS minor since its launch in 2013 (25-40, annually), this data leads us to conservatively estimate an enrollment of 3-5 students in year 1, 10-15 students annually by year 5, and 20-25 majors annually by year 10. Our goal ultimately is to eclipse these numbers, but we feel that these conservative estimates are more than achievable over the next few years while also aligning with major enrollments in other AIS/NAS programs in the region and across the country (UW AIS: 12-15 majors, UCLA AIS: 20 majors, UNM NAS: 30 majors).

**e. An abbreviated description of how the program contributes to addressing statewide needs and goals and aligns with the university's mission and strategic plan.**

- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:** the NAIS major would diversify curricular/intellectual programming by increasing opportunities for Native and non-Native students to learn about Indigenous peoples of Oregon, the Pacific Northwest, North America, and other areas of the world; by providing an intellectual community serving a chronically underserved and underrepresented AI/AN student population; by supporting the recruitment and retention of AI/AN students, faculty, and staff (the only demographic on campus that decreased over the last decade); by institutionally affirming the intellectual and curricular value of Native knowledge, governance, history, arts, and cultures on campus; and by its structured commitments to service and to the preservation, revitalization, and resurgence of Indigenous languages—all of which make the UO NAIS major unique among peer institutions within the State of Oregon and regionally, and the *only* undergraduate academic program on campus with structured commitments to work with tribal nations, communities, organizations, and other partners.
- **Doctoral Program in Indigenous, Race, and Ethnic Studies:** IRES will inaugurate its new doctoral program with the incoming cohort of Fall 2021. The program develops graduate education in Indigenous studies in a way that complements our undergraduate offerings and mentorship, while expanding the teaching pool for NAIS classes to include graduate students trained in the field and professional development in leading their own classes.
- **Provost Initiatives on the Environment, on Racial Disparities/Resilience, and on Service to Communities and the State:** Because Native people are the First Stewards of the land and continue to have deep connections to this place, development of Indigenous Traditional Environmental Knowledge and practice (ITEK) is vital to any serious conversations about environmental responsibility and sustainability. Similarly, the attention across the NAIS curriculum to the intersections of race, settler colonialism, and indigeneity are crucial to any informed initiatives on racial disparities and racial justice. The NAIS major offers multiple opportunities (classes, field trips, organizations, guest speakers, internships) for students to engage at the intersections of these important fields of study.
- **UO Commitments to Indigenous Nations, Communities, and Students:** In 2017, the UO and

Oregon's nine federally recognized tribal nations entered a Memorandum of Understanding for strengthening government-to-government relations and serving Indigenous students and communities. Among items that serve as a foundation of that plan are commitments to promote a campus climate conducive to the creation and dissemination of responsible knowledge about Native peoples, to meet the cultural and educational needs of Native American communities/students, to promote Native American Studies and educational programs throughout the system, and to promote a better understanding of Native American issues on campus and across the state and region. Investing in the curricular program of NAIS meets each of these commitments.

- **SB-13—Tribal History/Shared History:** Enacted in 2017, SB 13 requires new kinds of collaboration between state educators and tribes to deliver improved, culturally competent instruction at K-12 schools. Two NAIS major core faculty are professors in the College of Education, which houses our Sapsik'walá Native teacher education program. Going forward, *all* Oregon teachers need to be well versed in Native studies. Institutions with visible and developed NAIS programs will be poised to capture students working to gain competence in this critically important field and will serve as a destination for prospective educators, policy makers, scholars, and graduate students for the development and implementation of Indigenous curricular and instructional standards. UO NAIS will have impacts on both post-secondary and K-12 education throughout the state.
- **Post-Pandemic Prospects, Commitments, and Strengths:** In an email of Nov. 12, 2020, the Office of Provost charged the UO community to consider how the UO might emerge from the pandemic and what “values, priorities, and principles” should guide those decisions. Among other things, the letter prioritized equity, building upon existing institutional strengths at current or reduced levels of funding, and identifying areas for growth with minimal investments in resources or infrastructure. The NAIS major leverages existing faculty, staff, and curricular resources with *no immediate additional financial or infrastructural needs*. UO NAIS also has a growing reputation as an emerging leader in and destination for Native American and Indigenous Studies with widely respected and award-winning faculty working across multiple disciplines and units on campus.
- **Relationships with Other NAS/AIS Programs in Oregon:** UO NAIS complements Lane Community College by encouraging our students to enroll in Chinuk Wawa language classes, by working closely with LCC transfer students, and by regularly collaborating on academic, social, and cultural programming. Portland State University (PSU) has an Indigenous Nations Studies undergraduate major housed in the School of Gender, Race, and Nations; Southern Oregon University (SOU) also has a Native American Studies program in the form of an academic minor and certificate located in the Division of Humanities and Culture. Both units offer complementary curricula and programs to what we're proposing, including basic introductions to Native studies and coursework in Indigenous environmental and ecological issues, contemporary politics, land management, food sovereignty/justice, philosophy, literature, media, and the arts, Indigenous critical theory and decolonization theory, Indigenous research methods, and education studies. With UO NAIS, PSU and SOU also share commitments to tribal communities evident in our curricular structure and in our outreach to and partnerships with Oregon's tribal nations. SOU also sponsors the Konaway Nika Tillicum Pre-College Youth Academy which complements UO's academic-oriented summer bridge program, the Indigenous Pre-College Academy. PSU and SOU does crucial work with the students, communities, and tribal nations they serve in the Portland metro area and in Southern Oregon. Approval of a NAIS BS/BA undergraduate major at UO would solidify institutional support to Native studies and stated commitments to the nine tribes, amplifying the interdisciplinary breadth, curricular diversity, faculty numbers, and structural support that we've built at the UO over the past decade. As we see it, every academic institution--but especially public institutions like PSU, SOU, and UO--should actively support Native studies programs in every way possible and we look forward to partnering with them and other programs in the state and across the region to connect our programs, communities, and commitments in more structured and mutually-productive ways in the future.