

Memo

To: Dr. Holley Roberts, Provost; Dr. Indiren Pillay, Dean of COAS

From: Sunita Manian, Chair, Department of Philosophy, Religion, and Liberal Studies

Date: March 31st, 2026

Re: Department Name Change

The Department of Philosophy, Religion, and Liberal Studies (PALS) requests that the name of the department be changed to Philosophy, Religion, and Interdisciplinary Studies.

In September 2024 the PALS department proposed to the COAS C&I committee that the name of the Liberal Studies major be changed to Interdisciplinary Studies. We made this change for several reasons: First, the interdisciplinary major at GCSU was given the title “Liberal Studies major” many decades ago, when the major was structured differently. Students took courses from different disciplines and were not required to explore a particular theme. Interdisciplinary Studies — which is described as a *thematic study* of a topic drawing from several disciplines — was a more apt term for the major as it is currently structured. Second, Interdisciplinary Studies is a term with which students are more familiar. Most students do not know what “Liberal Studies” means. Third, Liberal Studies is sometimes identified with “General Studies” (including in its CIP classification) which is a program that some institutions offer that gives students a degree after reaching a certain number of credit hours, undermining the intentionality that undergirded the student’s actual program of study within the Liberal Studies concentrations at GCSU. Thus, Interdisciplinary Studies Major which is a better descriptor of the Liberal Studies major as it was structured is a terminology that students understand more readily and underscores the intentionality and curriculum structure embedded in the student’s program of study within the major.

The proposal to change the name of the Liberal Studies major to Interdisciplinary Studies major was approved by the COAS C&I committee, and was subsequently approved by the UCC in October 2024. In November of 2024 the proposed changes were submitted to the USG. We received final approval for changing the name of the major from Liberal Studies to Interdisciplinary Studies from the USG in January 2025. The name change went into effect in August 2025.

Thus, the current name of the department, Philosophy, Religion, and Liberal Studies does not accurately represent the majors in the department anymore. We therefore request that the name of the department be changed to Department of Philosophy, Religion, and Interdisciplinary Studies.