



What are Academic Degree Maps?

Academic Degree Maps are a new resource created to help students design and plan their undergraduate journey at UWB from first quarter to graduation.

The Academic Degree Map is a visual four-year undergraduate plan based on an intended major. Each map clearly identifies key prerequisite courses for a major, provides a suggested sequence of courses, and highlights milestone courses and special requirements necessary to make timely progress to complete a major. Academic Degree Maps provide a clear, direct path to graduation.

Upcoming versions will also highlight experiential learning opportunities such as community-based learning courses, extracurricular activities, career preparation, study abroad, and undergraduate research that are specifically recommended for each major.

Multiple Users of the Maps

The primary users of Academic Degree Maps are currently enrolled UWB undergraduate students.

We imagine prospective students may use these maps as well to help them understand what their UWB degree plan is.

The maps may be viewed and downloaded by anyone who visits UW MyPlan.

Academic and Career advisors from Community Colleges and High Schools have indicated that they can use the maps as tools in advising their students.

In addition, parents, guardians, families, and others who provide support to prospective and current students could also benefit from Degree Maps.

Why degree maps?

The Academic Degree Maps initiative supports UWB's goal of improving students' experiences. All UW undergraduate students must select a major aligned to their goals. Students need to fulfill specific requirements to get into the major and complete their degree.

Many students reported having difficulty in navigating university and degree requirements. Since academic advising is voluntary, many of our students navigate the university system on their own. This can be especially difficult for first-generation college students who do not have a family member to provide college guidance. When students do not know about and/or seek out support, they often unnecessarily struggle which leads to lower academic performance. They go to multiple places to piece together prerequisite and degree requirements. Additionally, each resource uses a unique format, and students could not easily compare majors.

We created Academic Degree Maps for each of the 48 UWB undergraduate majors. Using a common template, they are designed to give students a birds-eye view of each UWB degree, alert students to both curricular and co-curricular programming, and enable comparisons of multiple degree programs.

The goal is to help students learn how to navigate and track their own progress toward graduation, empowering them to have ownership of their academic path and future, and get the most out of their undergraduate experience. We want students to be able to work with a professional academic advisor to customize their degree maps to meet their individual needs, providing opportunities for students to explore while working towards a college degree.

“I had no idea I should have taken my math classes, so I ended up missing my first chem sequence.”

— Shugla Kakar
A first-generation student, came to UWB to start a pre-med program, she had a hard time with her schedule.

“I was shy, and it was a big deal moving to a new city for college. I didn't understand where anything was or how it worked. Even though there are on campus resource centers, there is no way I would have initially thought to go to one.”

— Jit Roopra
Roopra

Creating the Maps: A Two Year Journey

Spring 2018	Representatives from ASUWB approached the Office of Undergraduate Learning to brainstorm ways to make degree programs more transparent to students.
Spring - Summer 2018	The Office of Undergraduate Learning reviewed and researched the use and format of degree maps from schools across the nation to determine models that could be adapted for UWB student needs.
Summer 2018 - Fall 2019	The Office of Undergraduate Learning teamed up with students, advisors, faculty, deans, and subject matter experts across campus to design a template for the maps.
Fall 2019 - Winter 2019	School advisors, curriculum leads, and faculty populated the degree map templates for every major.
Spring 2019	Feedback solicited from multiple campus stakeholders including students, advising groups, and faculty leaders.
Summer - Fall 2019	Maps were finalized and remediated for accessibility.
Winter 2020	Maps made available to students through Canvas and UW MyPlan platform (myplan.uw.edu).
Spring - Summer 2020	Co-curricular maps will be created and added to the degree maps.
Spring - Summer 2020	Meta-majors will be identified and published for student use.
Annually	Maps will be reviewed and updated each summer and/or when a degree program has significant changes.



Next Steps

We plan to use the Academic Degree Maps at many touchpoints with students including orientation, academic advising appointments, and during the first quarter, first-year experience courses so that students are aware of this tool and can maximise their use.

Additionally, we hope to expand the academic degree maps in at least two ways:

—Create **co-curricular degree maps** to pair with the four year academic plan. We will identify and outline meaningful co-curricular exploration and experiential learning opportunities that help students achieve post graduation goals and provide a fuller undergraduate learning experience. These co-curricular opportunities will be tailored to be specific to each degree.

—Cluster majors into **meta-majors** to help students see multiple pathways to their post graduation goals. Each meta-major will have a common set of prerequisites for students to start taking during their first year. This enables students to work towards a degree while also leaving room for exploration.

Key Design Questions:

—Can we find a balance of structure and flexibility which, much like a GPS system, provides students with clear directions for completion while also allowing for self-directed exploration?

—Can we help students understand the multiple pathways to their career aspirations?

—Can we provide a guide that is useful, but not overwhelming?

—Can we provide a tool that supports academic advising and encourages students to seek out professional guidance when needed?

—Can we design a system that makes it easy to compare multiple majors?